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PATSY WALKER

Stories---

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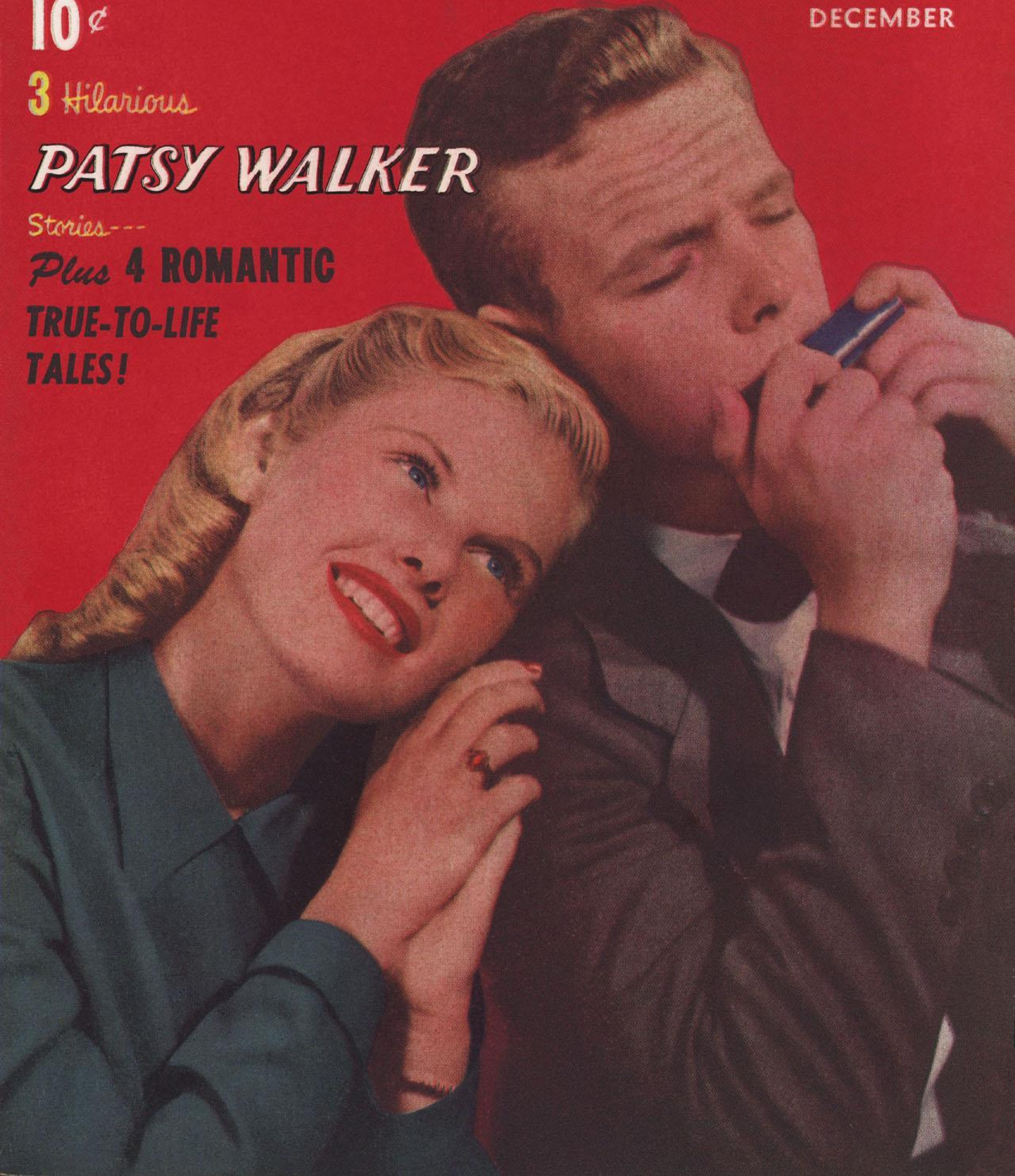

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where it shows most

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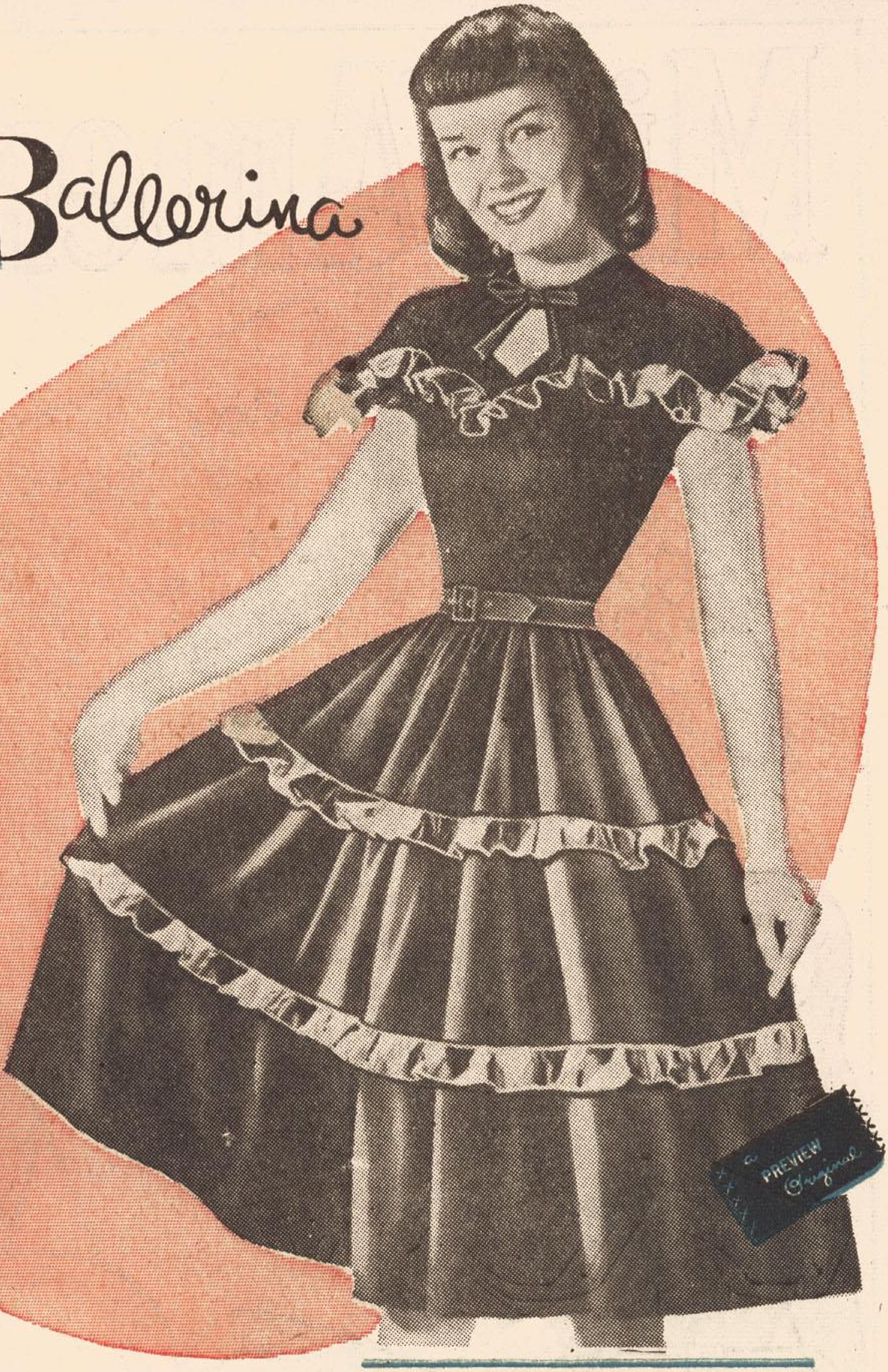

It's your gayest, your most romantic, your very loveliest dress! We've spared none of the precious fabric to give you the widest skirt you've ever seen, to swirl and swish like a ballerina's. Ruffles of gleaming, multicolored plaid taffeta ripple all around the skirt and across the bodice and cap sleeves. The peek-a-boo neckline ties with a perky bow. Long, 20" zipper down the back; step into your dress after your hair is done! Elegantly made, with self-covered belt and buckle. Finest rayon faille, in fetching colors:

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CONTENTS

Comics

PATSY WALKER
A Dog's Life 6

PATSY WALKER
Her Excuse to Reduce . . 20

PATSY WALKER
Thrown for a Loss . . . 37

Fiction

JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES
By Rosalie F. Wilson . . . 14

LOVE THAT SCARECROW
By Russell Gordon Carter . 26

MUSIC HATH MICE
By Charlotta Kent 32

BEST LAID PLANS
By Maxine Shore 45

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Are you in the know?

Do this if you'd try —

- ☐ *Cartooning*
- ☐ *A different hairdo*
- ☐ *A new parlor game*

Is your face round or square . . . long or oval? Do you really know? Before trying a different hairdo—put tracing paper over your photograph, then outline your face. It tells you your true type, so you can plan your coiffure accordingly! Experts say that's important. Same as it's important (on problem days) to know *your* type of sanitary napkin. That's *easy*, with Kotex. Just try all *3 sizes* of Kotex: you'll find the one that's very personally yours.

Feel neglected at a no-date party?

- ☐ *Crawl into a corner*
- ☐ *Start a conversation*
- ☐ *Choose the nearest exit*

At a strictly stag-and-doe shindig, maybe you haven't snared a partner. So—you're crushed! To banish "wallflower panic" just stroll up to that boogie man at the keyboard . . . start a conversation. It'll be a duet! Self-assurance wouldn't forsake you if you'd learn to meet trying situations confidently. Take trying days, for instance. You'd be poised—feel secure—with Kotex and the *extra* protection of that exclusive *safety center*. Kotex keeps you fluster-proof!

What's the latest "dorm" doings?

- ☐ *Snack smuggling*
- ☐ *Platter spinning*
- ☐ *Briefing-sessions*

Even "dorm" life can be beautiful! Main idea's to be comfortable, though, say campus queens. They're the gals who know that for comfort on *difficult* days there's nothing quite like the softness of Kotex: the napkin made to *stay soft while you wear it*. They're the same, comfort-loving gals who are "briefing" their bathrobes . . . chopping 'em off, for more freedom. Or sporting the dreamy, poetic Study Coat pictured here. Either way, brief's the word!

Who should follow the head waiter?

- ☐ *The girls*
- ☐ *The boys*
- ☐ *One couple*

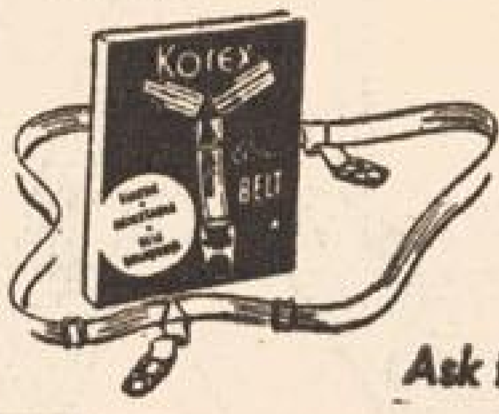
When a head waiter beckons, it's no time to be confuddled. Confidence is such a help . . . like being sure that the *girls* should follow first. The eyes of patrons are upon you! Then's when (at certain times) you bless Kotex for those *flat pressed ends* that reveal no outlines. You're *sure* you're smooth. And at ease, with the comfort of your new Kotex Sanitary Belt that fits snugly; doesn't bind . . . that's adjustable; all-elastic!

3 guesses what girls forget most!

- ☐ *Keep dainty with deodorants*
- ☐ *Practice good posture*
- ☐ *Buy a new sanitary belt*

Of *course* you're careful about daintiness, you say. And you keep posture-perfect, too. But isn't there *one* thing you've overlooked? Namely, to buy a new sanitary belt? Yes, because most girls forget . . . keep putting it off "till next time." To get *all* the comfort your napkin gives, *now's* the time to buy a new, *Kotex* Sanitary Belt!

Fact is—the Kotex Belt is made to lie flat, without twisting or curling. So a *Kotex* Belt fits snugly; comfortably. It's adjustable . . . all-elastic . . . doesn't bind when you bend!



Kotex Sanitary Belt

Ask for it by name

Kotex
Sanitary Napkins
Kotex

More women choose KOTEX*

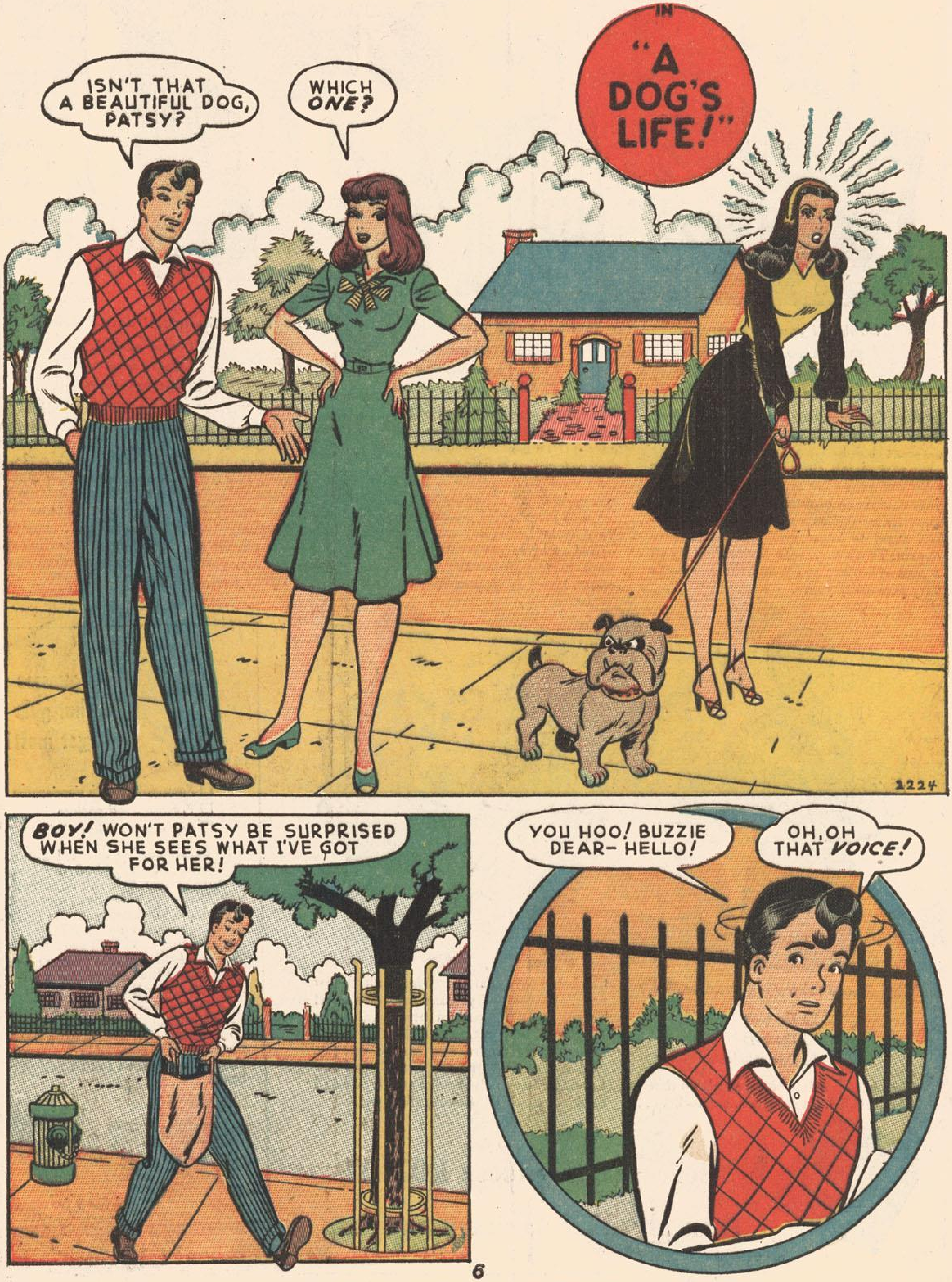
than all other sanitary napkins

*T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

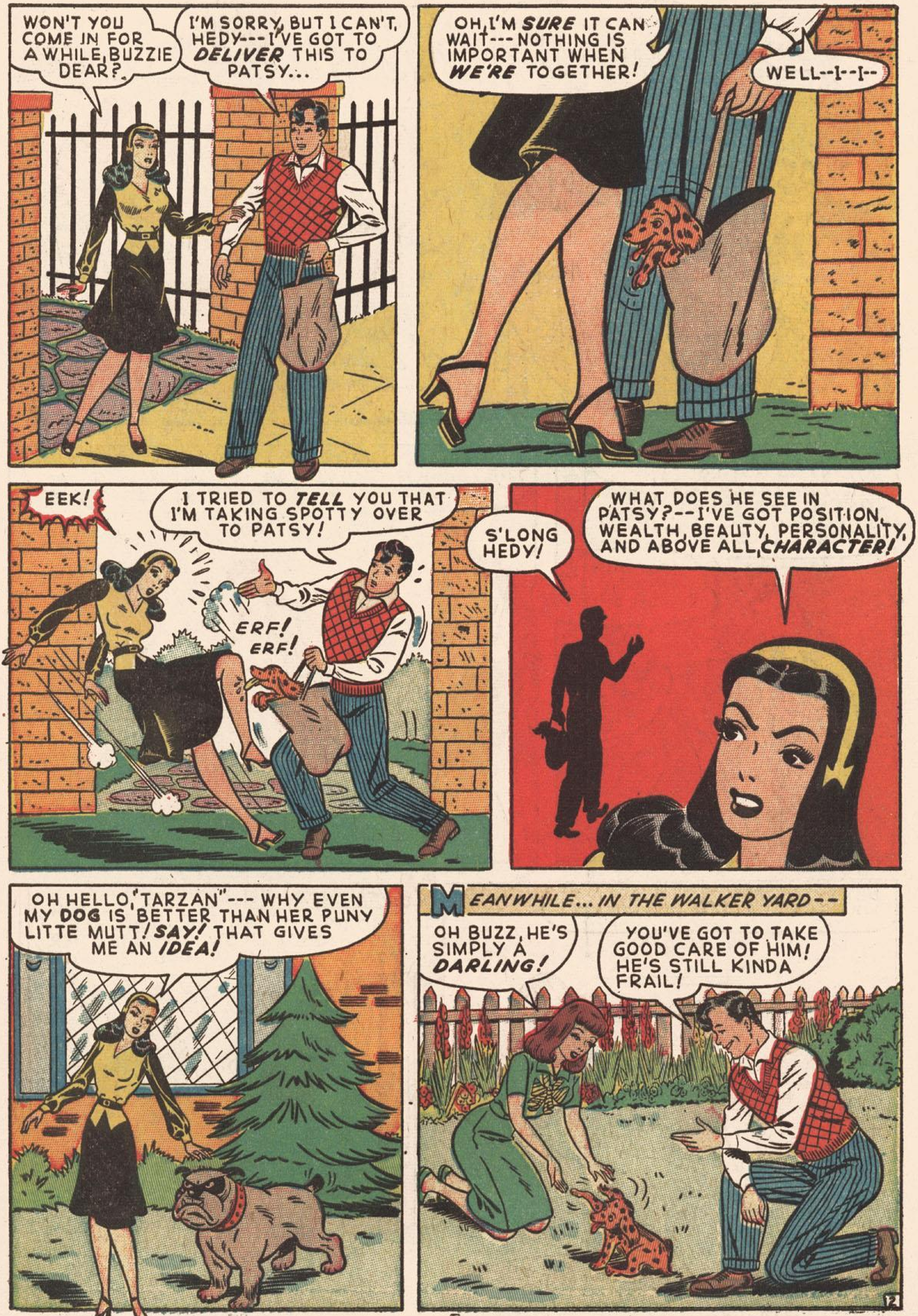
PATSY WALKER

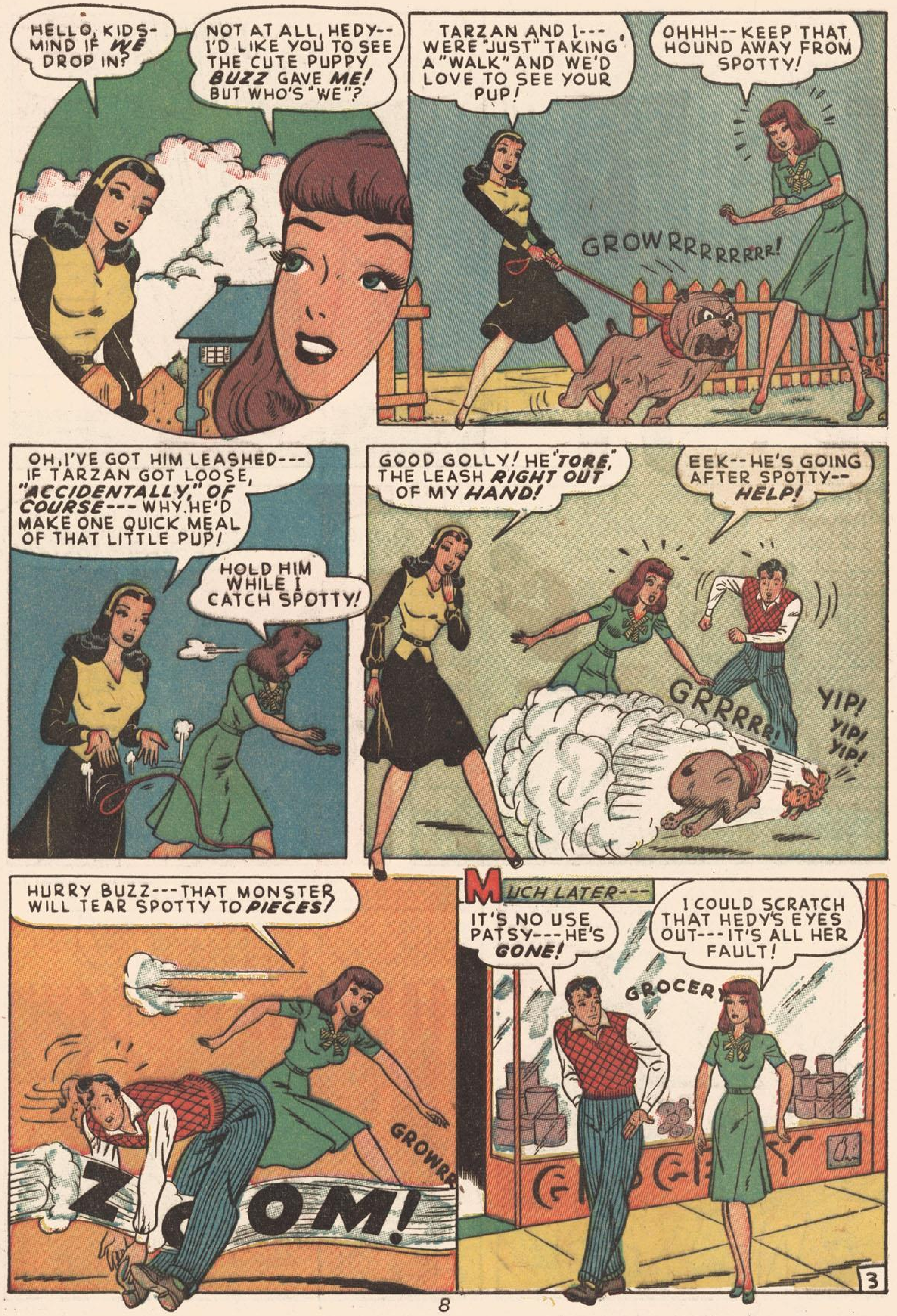
IN

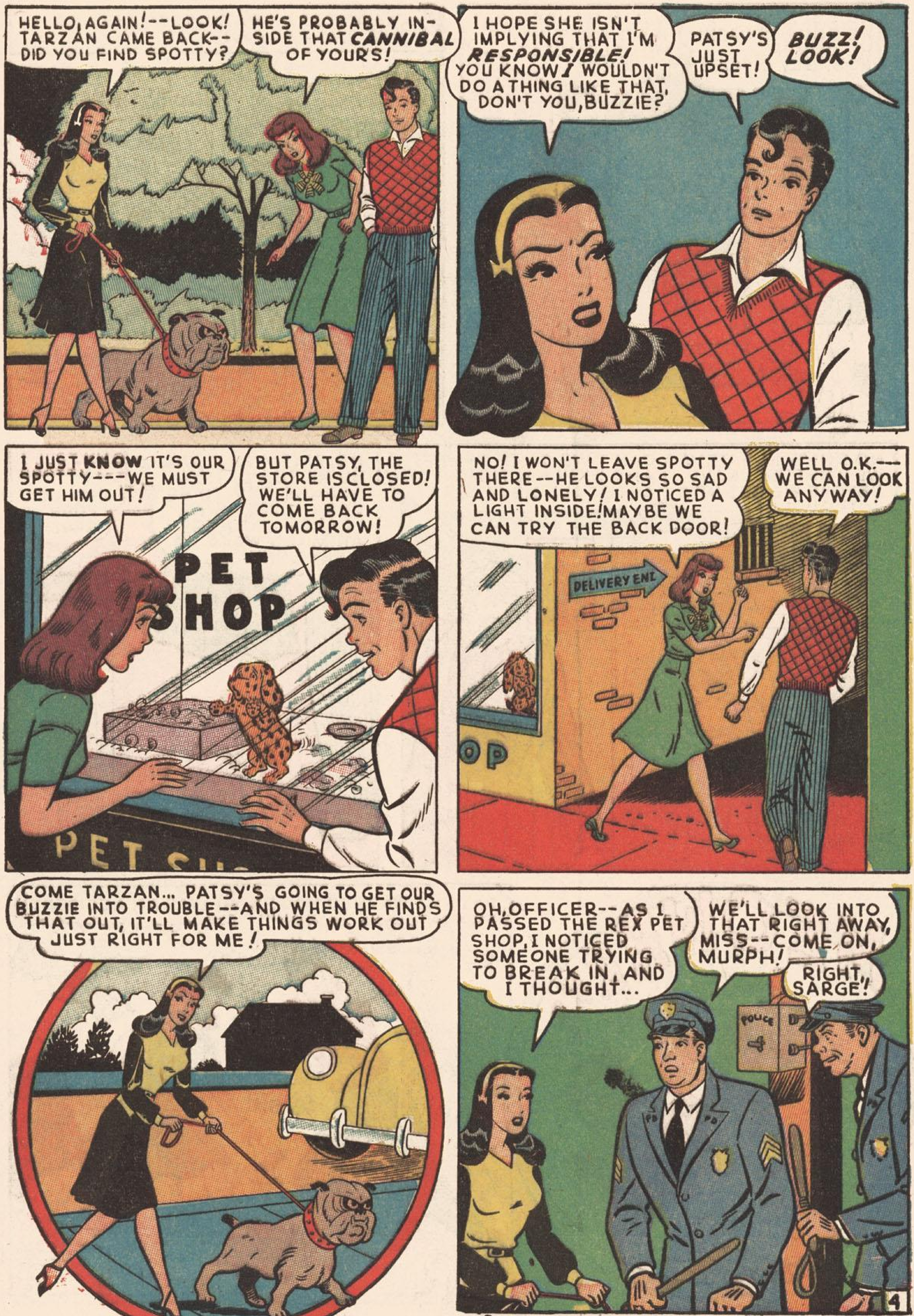
“A DOG'S LIFE!”

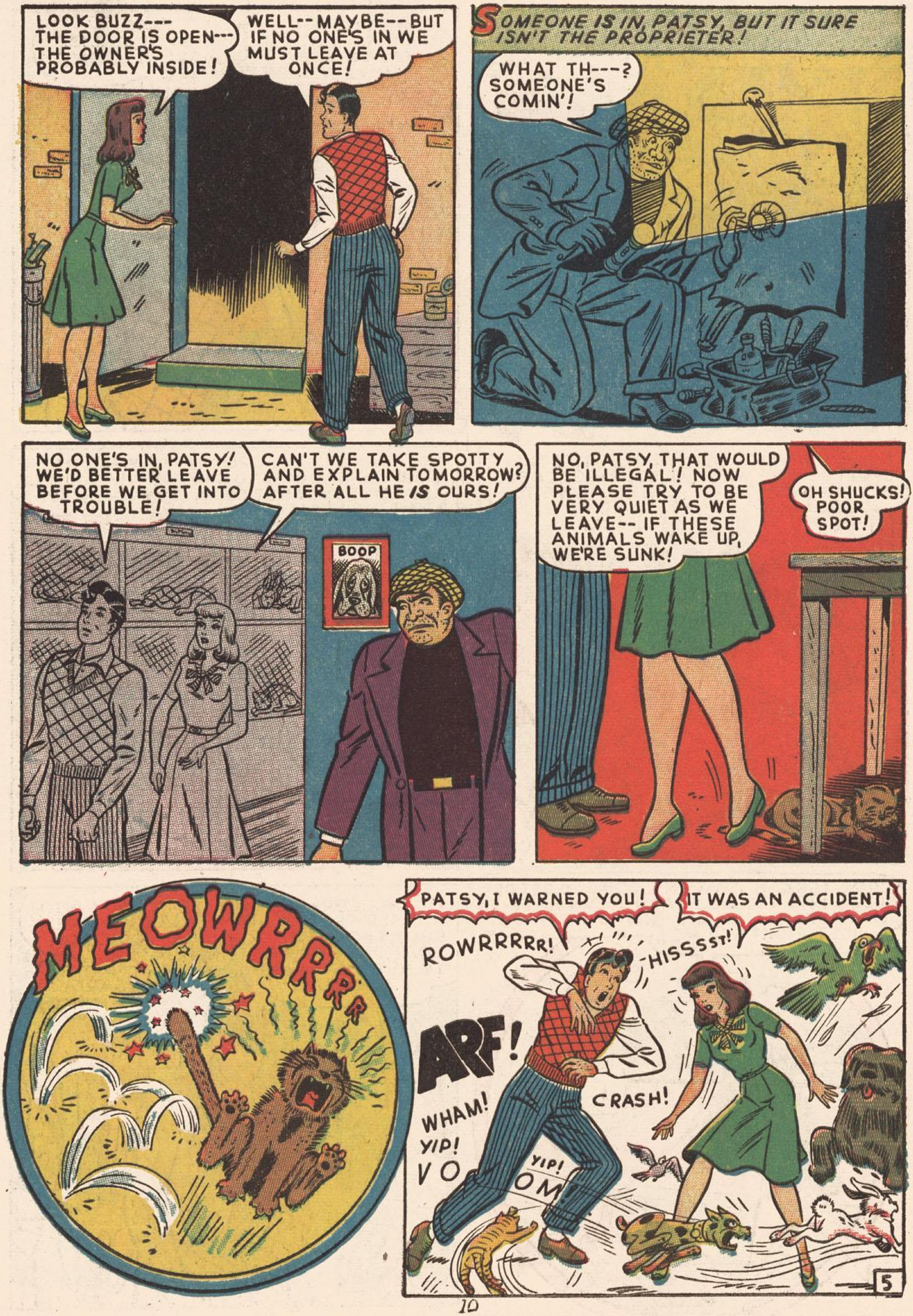


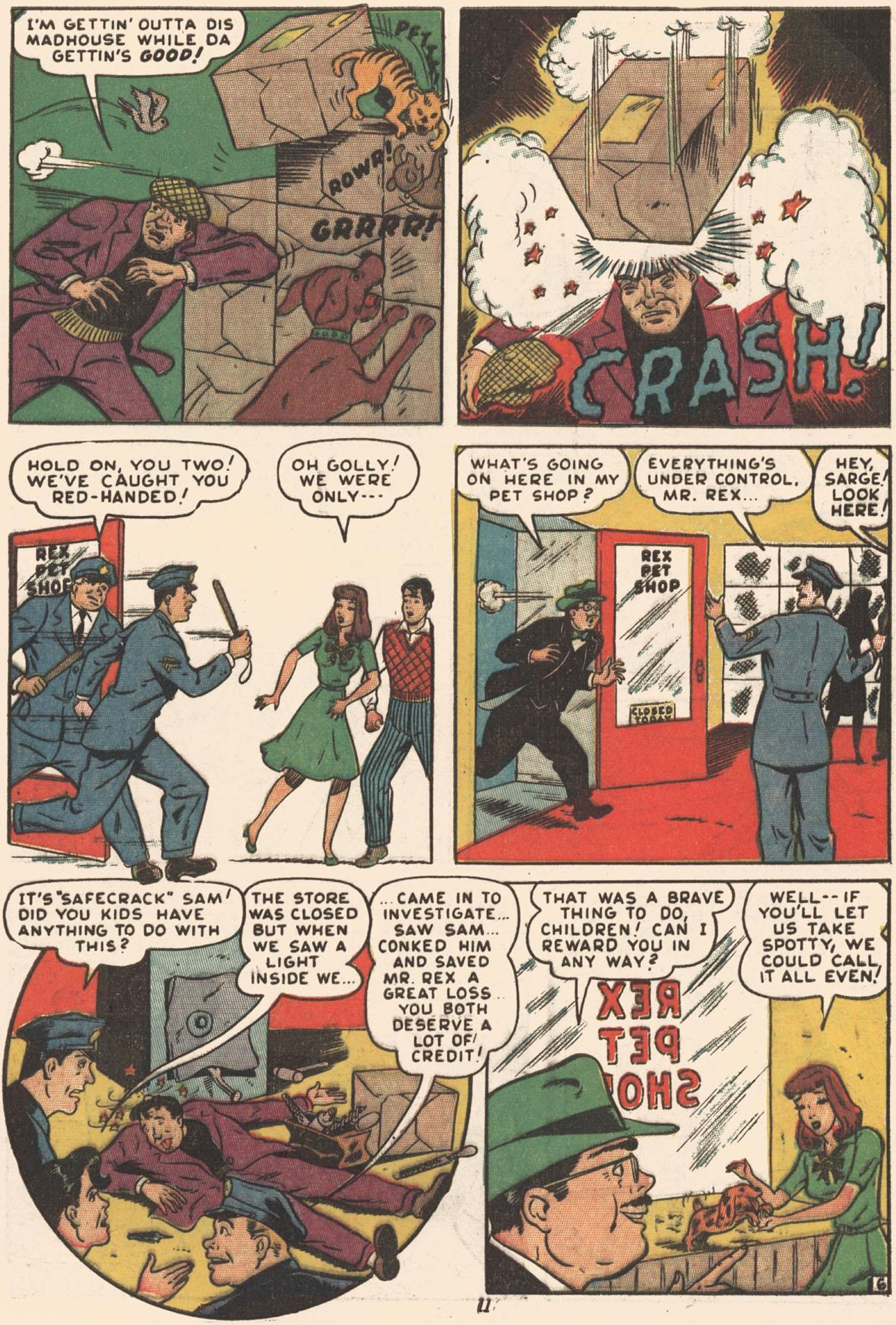
ISN'T THAT A BEAUTIFUL DOG, PATSY?
WHICH *ONE?*
2224
BOY! WON'T PATSY BE SURPRISED WHEN SHE SEES WHAT I'VE GOT FOR HER!
YOU HOO! BUZZIE DEAR- HELLO!
OH, OH THAT *VOICE!*

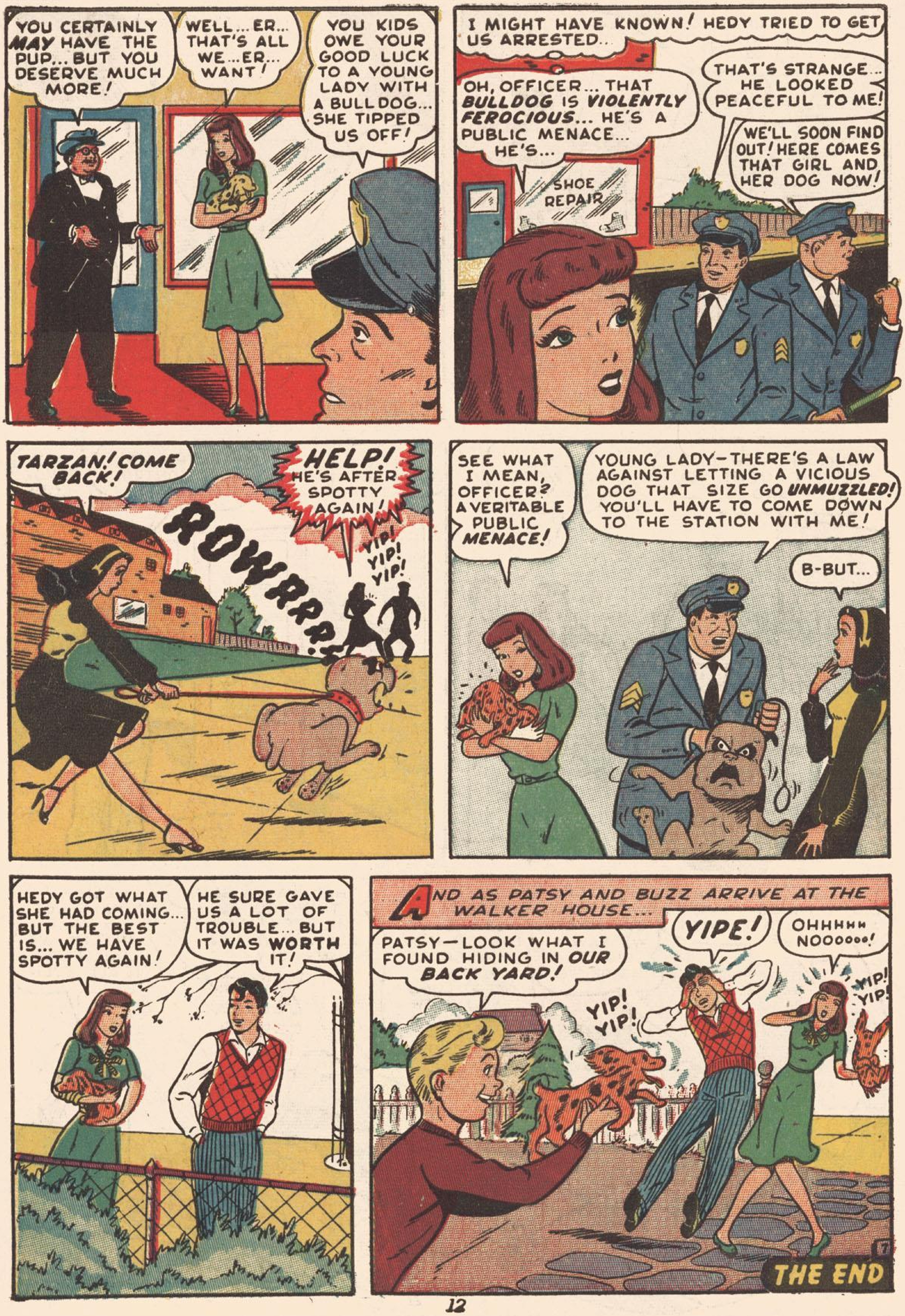

WON'T YOU COME IN FOR A WHILE, BUZZIE DEAR?
I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T, HEDY--- I'VE GOT TO *DELIVER* THIS TO PATSY...
OH, I'M *SURE* IT CAN WAIT--- NOTHING IS IMPORTANT WHEN *WE'RE* TOGETHER!
WELL--I--I--
EEK!
I TRIED TO *TELL* YOU THAT I'M TAKING SPOTTY OVER TO PATSY!
ERF! ERF!
S'LONG HEDY!
WHAT DOES HE SEE IN PATSY?--I'VE GOT POSITION, WEALTH, BEAUTY, PERSONALITY, AND ABOVE ALL, *CHARACTER!*
OH HELLO, "TARZAN"--- WHY EVEN MY *DOG* IS BETTER THAN HER PUNY LITTE MUTT! *SAY!* THAT GIVES ME AN *IDEA!*
MEANWHILE... IN THE WALKER YARD--
OH BUZZ, HE'S SIMPLY A *DARLING!*
YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM! HE'S STILL KINDA FRAIL!
12


HELLO, KIDS-MIND IF *WE* DROP IN?
NOT AT ALL, HEDY--I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE THE CUTE PUPPY *BUZZ* GAVE *ME!* BUT WHO'S "WE"?
TARZAN AND I---WERE "JUST" TAKING A "WALK" AND WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOUR PUP!
OHHH--KEEP THAT HOUND AWAY FROM SPOTTY!
GROWRRRRRRRR!
OH, I'VE GOT HIM LEASHED---IF TARZAN GOT LOOSE, *"ACCIDENTALLY," OF COURSE*---WHY, HE'D MAKE ONE QUICK MEAL OF THAT LITTLE PUP!
HOLD HIM WHILE I CATCH SPOTTY!
GOOD GOLLY! HE *"TORE,"* THE LEASH *RIGHT OUT* OF MY *HAND!*
EEK--HE'S GOING AFTER SPOTTY--*HELP!*
GRRRRRR!
YIP! YIP! YIP!
HURRY BUZZ---THAT MONSTER WILL TEAR SPOTTY TO *PIECES!*
GROWRR
ZOOM!
MUCH LATER---
IT'S NO USE PATSY---HE'S *GONE!*
I COULD SCRATCH THAT HEDY'S EYES OUT---IT'S ALL HER FAULT!
GROCERY
GROCERY
3


HELLO, AGAIN!--LOOK! TARZAN CAME BACK--DID YOU FIND SPOTTY?
HE'S PROBABLY INSIDE THAT **CANNIBAL** OF YOURS!
I HOPE SHE ISN'T IMPLYING THAT I'M **RESPONSIBLE!** YOU KNOW *I* WOULDN'T DO A THING LIKE THAT, DON'T YOU, BUZZIE?
PATSY'S JUST UPSET!
BUZZ! LOOK!
I JUST **KNOW** IT'S OUR SPOTTY---WE MUST GET HIM OUT!
BUT PATSY, THE STORE IS CLOSED! WE'LL HAVE TO COME BACK TOMORROW!
PET SHOP
PET SH
NO! I WON'T LEAVE SPOTTY THERE--HE LOOKS SO SAD AND LONELY! I NOTICED A LIGHT INSIDE! MAYBE WE CAN TRY THE BACK DOOR!
WELL O.K.---WE CAN LOOK ANYWAY!
DELIVERY ENT.
OP
COME TARZAN... PATSY'S GOING TO GET OUR BUZZIE INTO TROUBLE--AND WHEN HE FINDS THAT OUT, IT'LL MAKE THINGS WORK OUT JUST RIGHT FOR ME!
OH, OFFICER--AS I PASSED THE REX PET SHOP, I NOTICED SOMEONE TRYING TO BREAK IN, AND I THOUGHT...
WE'LL LOOK INTO THAT RIGHT AWAY, MISS--COME ON, MURPH!
RIGHT, SARGE!
POLICE
PD
4


LOOK BUZZ--- THE DOOR IS OPEN--- THE OWNER'S PROBABLY INSIDE!
WELL--MAYBE--BUT IF NO ONE'S IN WE MUST LEAVE AT ONCE!
SOMEONE IS IN, PATSY, BUT IT SURE ISN'T THE PROPRIETER!
WHAT TH---? SOMEONE'S COMIN'!
NO ONE'S IN, PATSY! WE'D BETTER LEAVE BEFORE WE GET INTO TROUBLE!
CAN'T WE TAKE SPOTTY AND EXPLAIN TOMORROW? AFTER ALL HE *IS* OURS!
BOOP
NO, PATSY, THAT WOULD BE ILLEGAL! NOW PLEASE TRY TO BE VERY QUIET AS WE LEAVE-- IF THESE ANIMALS WAKE UP, WE'RE SUNK!
OH SHUCKS! POOR SPOT!
MEOWRRRR
PATSY, I WARNED YOU!
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
ROWRRRRR!
HISSSST!
ARF!
CRASH!
WHAM!
YIP!
YIP!
VOOM
5


I'M GETTIN' OUTTA DIS MADHOUSE WHILE DA GETTIN'S *GOOD!*
PFTTT
ROWR!
GRRRR!
CRASH!
HOLD ON, YOU TWO! WE'VE CAUGHT YOU RED-HANDED!
OH GOLLY! WE WERE ONLY---
REX PET SHOP
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE IN MY PET SHOP?
EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL, MR. REX...
HEY, SARGE! LOOK HERE!
REX PET SHOP
CLOSED TODAY
IT'S "SAFECRACK" SAM! DID YOU KIDS HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS?
THE STORE WAS CLOSED BUT WHEN WE SAW A LIGHT INSIDE WE...
...CAME IN TO INVESTIGATE... SAW SAM... CONKED HIM AND SAVED MR. REX A GREAT LOSS.. YOU BOTH DESERVE A LOT OF CREDIT!
THAT WAS A BRAVE THING TO DO, CHILDREN! CAN I REWARD YOU IN ANY WAY?
REX PET SHOP
WELL-- IF YOU'LL LET US TAKE SPOTTY, WE COULD CALL IT ALL EVEN!
16


YOU CERTAINLY *MAY* HAVE THE PUP... BUT YOU DESERVE MUCH MORE!
WELL... ER... THAT'S ALL WE... ER... WANT!
YOU KIDS OWE YOUR GOOD LUCK TO A YOUNG LADY WITH A BULLDOG... SHE TIPPED US OFF!
I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN! HEDY TRIED TO GET US ARRESTED...
OH, OFFICER... THAT ***BULLDOG*** IS ***VIOLENTLY FEROCIOUS***... HE'S A PUBLIC MENACE... HE'S...
SHOE REPAIR
THAT'S STRANGE... HE LOOKED PEACEFUL TO ME!
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT! HERE COMES THAT GIRL AND HER DOG NOW!
TARZAN! COME BACK!
HELP! HE'S AFTER SPOTTY AGAIN!
ROWRRR
YIP! YIP! YIP!
SEE WHAT I MEAN, OFFICER? A VERITABLE PUBLIC *MENACE!*
YOUNG LADY—THERE'S A LAW AGAINST LETTING A VICIOUS DOG THAT SIZE GO ***UNMUZZLED!*** YOU'LL HAVE TO COME DOWN TO THE STATION WITH ME!
B-BUT...
HEDY GOT WHAT SHE HAD COMING... BUT THE BEST IS... WE HAVE SPOTTY AGAIN!
HE SURE GAVE US A LOT OF TROUBLE... BUT IT WAS **WORTH** IT!
AND AS PATSY AND BUZZ ARRIVE AT THE WALKER HOUSE...
PATSY—LOOK WHAT I FOUND HIDING IN ***OUR BACK YARD!***
YIPE!
OHHHHH NOOooooo!
YIP! YIP!
YIP! YIP!
7
THE END

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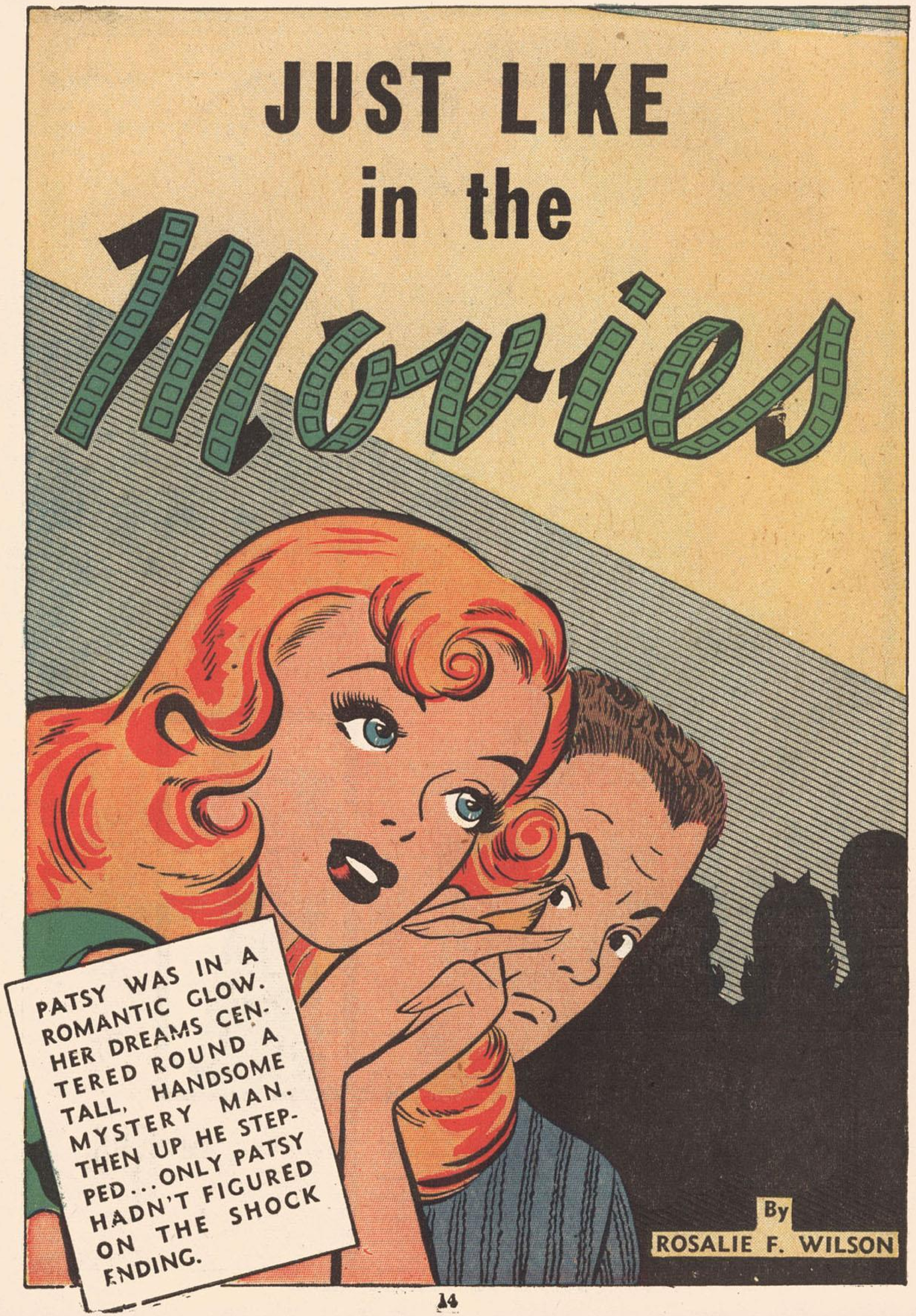
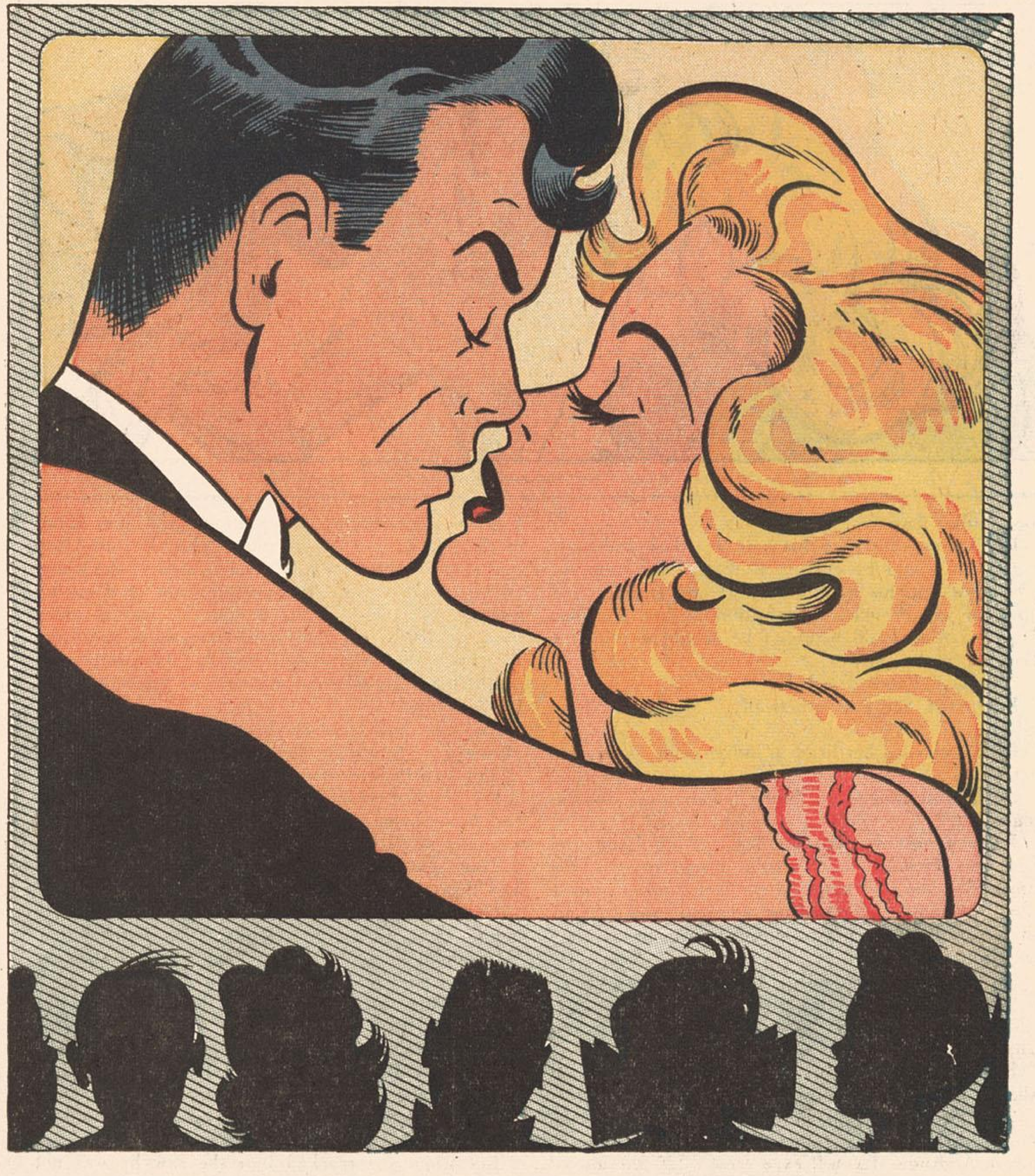


JUST LIKE in the Movies

PATSY WAS IN A ROMANTIC GLOW. HER DREAMS CENTERED ROUND A TALL, HANDSOME MYSTERY MAN. THEN UP HE STEPPED...ONLY PATSY HADN'T FIGURED ON THE SHOCK ENDING.

By ROSALIE F. WILSON



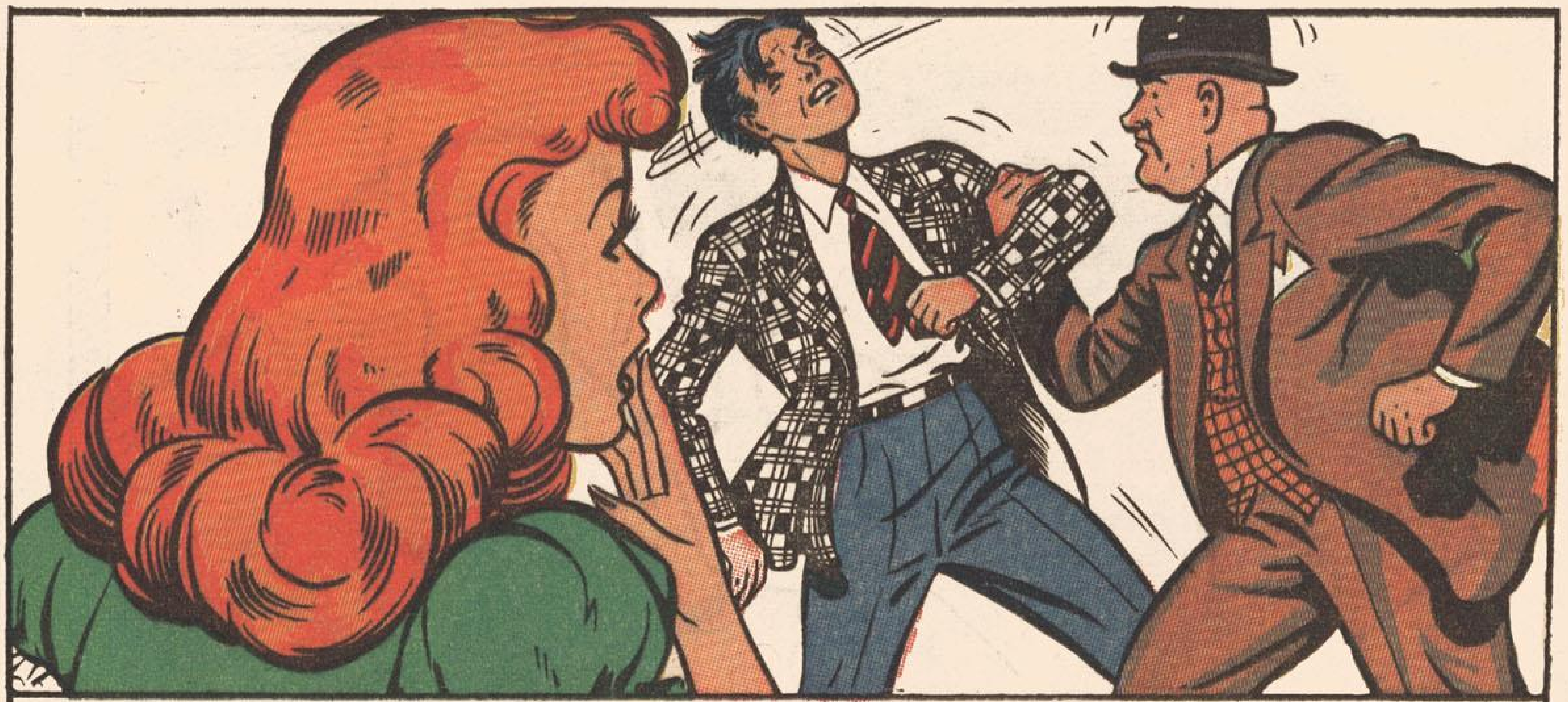
PATSY blinked at the light, the thin, watery afternoon light that appeared to glow after the darkness of the theater. She walked slowly, more erect than usual and she held her shoulders back the way *Cora* had done. It seemed, it actually seemed that she was Cora, that hard, slender, defiant girl with the soft heart beneath the disdainful manner.

Nobody understood Cora either, Patsy thought, until Alan Ladd had come along.

She thought of the way it had ended, almost the same as it had begun. Alan Ladd had seen Cora walking along the street with that slow, distinctive walk and he had caught up with her and staring straight ahead asked, "Drink?" Cora hadn't looked at him at all. At first. Then only her eyes moved. They had traveled slowly from his feet all the way up to the smooth light hair and she had drawled, "Maybe."

Pete Carter said, "How's for a coke?"

Patsy, brought back to reality, suppressed a start of annoyance. How exactly like Pete to be so wordy, so utterly explicit. She didn't look at him at all for a minute and then, without moving her head she allowed her eyes to travel from the scuffed saddle shoes, up past the wrinkled socks, the undistinguished slacks, the light blue sport shirt, to his all-



A large beefy man had joined him and was growling, "Okay, let's have it."

too-familiar face.

Pete's eyes were blue, his hair was dark and curling, or it would be curling if that awful crew cut ever grew out, his nose was short and straight and his grin was crooked. In addition he had freckles. *Freckles*. Alan Ladd wouldn't be caught dying in a gunfight with freckles.

"Maybe," Patsy drawled.

Pete eyed her sympathetically. "Neck stiff?" he asked.

Patsy swivelled her head in indignation. "Certainly not."

"Well you looked so funny," Pete said disarmingly.

Patsy shrugged. Alan Ladd was Alan Ladd and Pete was Pete. It was awfully discouraging sometimes. But she had known Pete ever since the days when her mother starched her rompers, and by now she certainly ought not to expect him to behave like an adult.

"Well," he said patiently. "Do you or don't you?"

"Okay," Patsy said resignedly. "A coke."

"Better," Pete told her grinning. "Much better. That Cora was a dopey dame."

Patsy's eyes widened. Pete hadn't been dumb at all. He had been laughing at her.

"On second thought I'm not at all thirsty," she said stiffly. "I enjoyed the movie. Thank you very much. And now if you'll excuse me . . ." She moved with quiet dignity down the street. She passed The Bootery, the Bon Ton Jewelry Company and McNeil's Department Store before she allowed herself to glance casually at the reflections in the store windows. The people who hurried along the crowded dusty avenue, packages clutched grimly to their chests, all had one thing in common. They were not Pete Carter.

Alan Ladd would have followed Cora.

Patsy sighed again.

It wasn't until she had reached the corner that she grew aware of the man whose steps matched her own, the man who spoke to her without looking at her.

"Please," he said softly. "You have to help me."

Cora's heart stopped for a minute and then began to race. It was so utterly improbable. It wasn't the sort of thing that ever happened to anyone she knew, really knew. It was like something out of a movie. She darted a quick glance at him. He was an older man,, probably 20, and handsome in a saturnine way. His hair was darker and his face somewhat thinner, but actually he did sort of resemble Alan Ladd a little.

The man had been watching her from the corner of his eye. A dimple flashed at the corner of his mouth swiftly and disappeared. "Thanks baby."

He brushed past her and Patsy's fingers which had been curled emptily were now closed tightly on a small compact package.

"But how . . . but who . . ." Patsy bit her lip. He had disappeared into the crowd.

In the movies the heroine always knew how to handle these things instinctively. Patsy felt helpless. What did you do with a package which a stranger thrust unceremoniously into your hands?

She waited at the corner for the light to change and then stepped out into the street. She started across hesitantly, uncertain of what to do next. The man appeared briefly at the corner on the other side. Suddenly the whole thing was too much for her. She'd return the package at once and that would be the end of that.

But when she reached him she saw he was not alone. A large beefy man had joined him and was growling, "Okay, let's have it."

Patsy slowed her steps. The younger man looked frightened and helpless and Patsy's heart went out to him.

"I don't understand," he kept saying. "I don't understand."

"You understand all right," the beefy man barked.

On a sudden impulse Patsy passed them and continued without stopping. She quickened her pace. Whatever difficulty the man was in would certainly not be helped by her handing back the package right at that moment. Probably the big man would only wrench it out of his hand, hit him and disappear. The beefy man was quite obviously the most criminal type. He might even, and Patsy gasped, kill him for whatever was in the package.

Cora would never have treated Alan Ladd like that.

Patsy tried hard to think what Cora might have done under similar circumstances. Probably she'd have taken the package home, put it in a safe place and waited for Alan to come and get it. How Alan would know where Cora lived was a mystery which Patsy felt unable to unravel. But she was pretty sure that he would know somehow, just as . . . as . . . *Greg Forrest* would know where she lived.

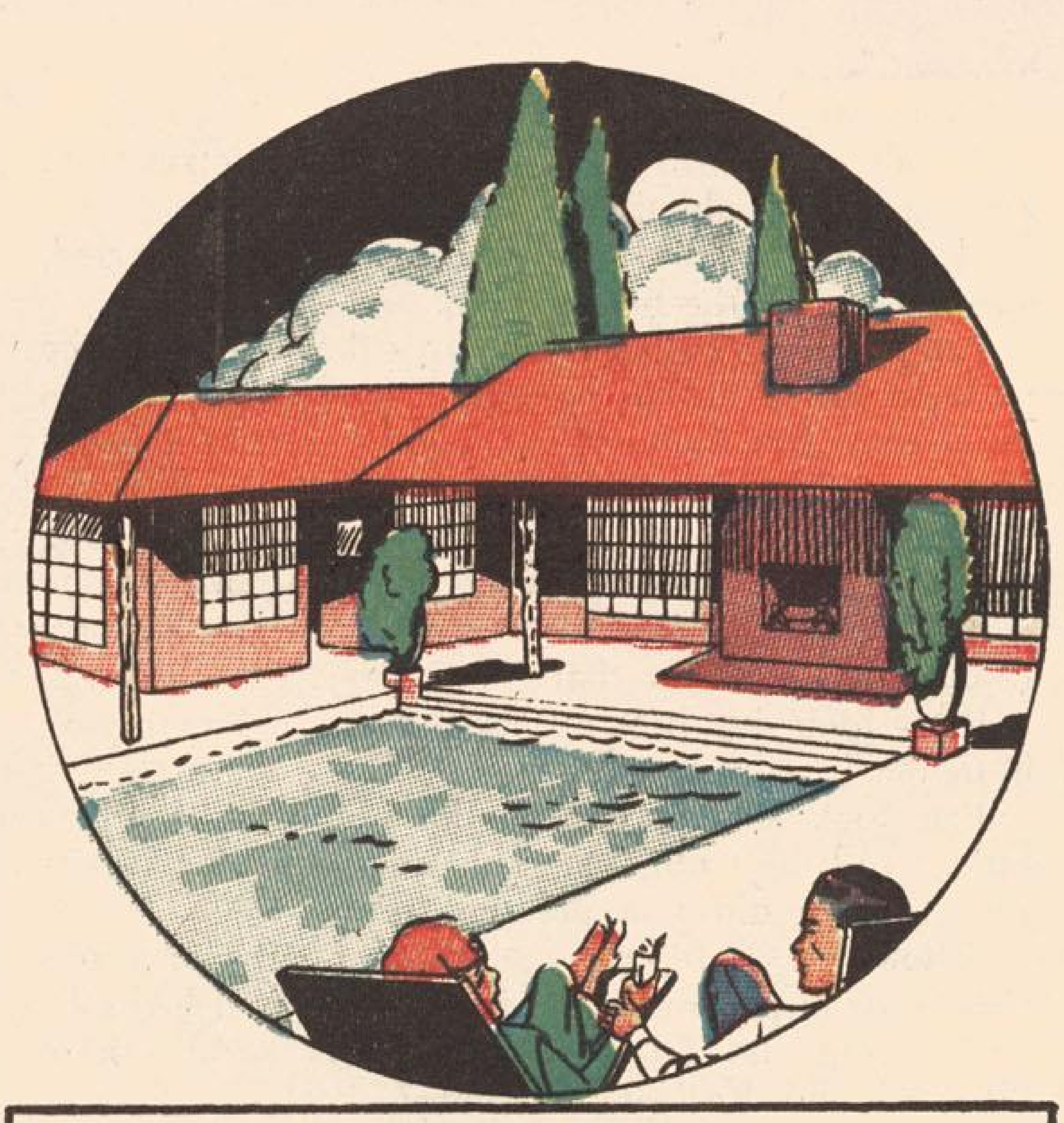
She felt better now. Having given the stranger a name made him infinitely less strange.

She continued along the street rapidly. It was incredibly romantic, every bit of it. She could picture them together, years later, laughing tenderly over the way they had met. Greg's eyes would be humble and adoring as he recalled how she had saved his life and helped him outwit the killer.

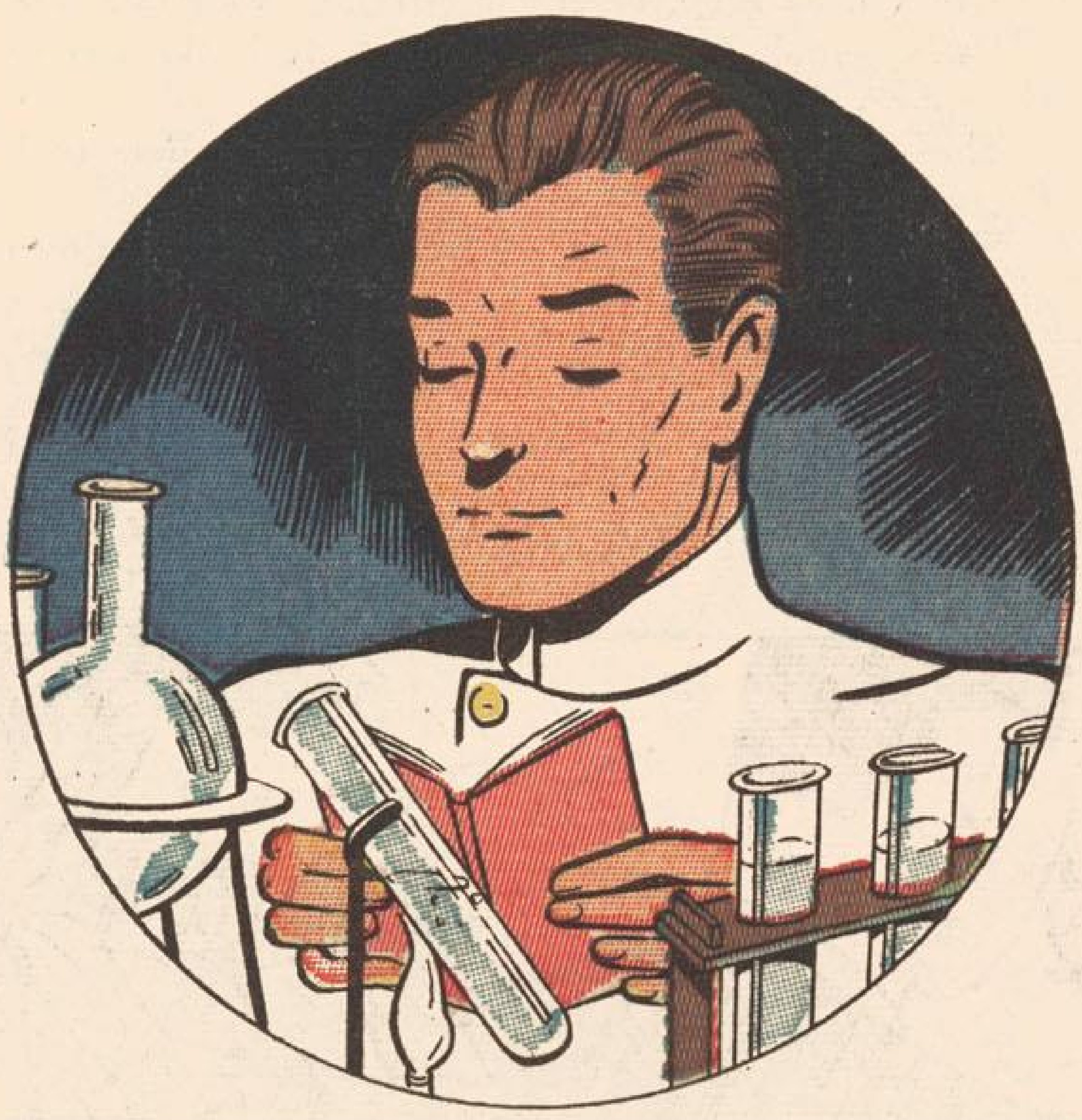
Greg would motion to the long, low, sprawling, beautifully appointed house that spread behind the flag-stoned patio where they reclined, sipping from delicate frosted glasses, and murmur, "Your doing, darling. Every bit of it. If you hadn't helped me save the family jewels from that . . ."

Patsy shook her head. No. It couldn't be family jewels. Not in a box so small her hand could cover it. It had to be something else. Something that was very valuable and yet didn't take up much room. *Radium*. Patsy had read that just a little bit of radium was worth hundreds of dollars. Or was it thousands?

That was it. Greg was a scientist and the radium was essential for an experiment. Some way a gang of thugs had heard of his owning it and were trying to take it from him. And Greg had to have the radium. He had scraped together every cent he had in the world to buy the radium with which to complete his experiments. The experiments would bring him fame.



"Your doing, darling. Every bit of it. If you hadn't helped me save the family jewels from that . . ."



He had scraped together every cent he had in the world to buy the radium with which to complete his experiments.

Patsy felt a faint prickling in her palm and gulped. But radium was dangerous. Quickly she shifted the package from one hand to the other. Then she remembered Radium was always encased in lead. And lead meant a heavy package. This package was light.

All the way home Patsy created and rejected patterns. In all of them, though, one thing remained constant. Greg. And Greg's gratitude. And their tender laughter in the years that would follow. Because this was something that *meant* something. It wasn't just ordinary kid stuff. It was Patsy's first brush with the adult world and it was the beginning of everything, just like in the movies.

She reached her front porch breathless.

"Neck better?"

Patsy glared at the boy sprawled on the white wooden steps. "Really, Pete, aren't you being a little childish?"

"That's me," Pete said complacently. "Just a kid at heart. One double-decker cone, a bag of popcorn, a rootin', tootin' western, and all's right with my world."

"Westerns!" Patsy said scornfully.

"And what's the matter with westerns?" Pete demanded.

"They're so silly," Patsy said in exasperation.

"Hah," Pete said. "Silly, she says. But these dopey gangster pictures aren't silly at all, are they? They portray true life, I suppose? One skinny guy with right on his side can knock over half-a-dozen assorted crooks holding tommyguns, and not even muss his hair."

"With the help of a smart woman," Patsy reminded him dreamily.

"You're a dope," Pete said tenderly.

"But it happens," Patsy said earnestly. "Really, it happens."

"Not out of Hollywood, it doesn't."

"You're stubborn and pig-headed," Patsy said, kicking him neatly in the ankle.

"I might say the same for you," Pete retorted, pushing her off the bottom step.

Patsy lost her balance, her arms flew wide and the package rolled out of her hand, spilling open. The small white box bounced and came to rest face down. The cotton batting lay in a neat white square on the newly cut grass, and beside it nestled the small ring in which the diamond blinked like dew in the sun.

Pete picked it up and stood erect, his smile gone. "Where did you get that?"

Patsy looked at him, frightened now. "A man gave it to me."

Pete took hold of her shoulders and shook her a little. "Tell the truth, Pat. This doesn't look like any joke. Where did you get the ring?"

"Honestly. On Main Street. After I left you a man came up and pushed it into my hand and rushed off."

Pete ran his fingers through his stubby hair. "Rushed off? Rushed off where?"

Patsy told him what she had seen on the corner.

"And what were you going to do with the ring?"

"Why, keep it for him," she said simply. "What else could I do?"

"Oh, no . . ." Pete groaned. "It isn't possible. It just isn't possible."

"Well, what would *you* have done, smarty?" Patsy asked, stung at his tone.

"Exactly what we're going to do now. Take it down to the station house."

"But Greg might . . ." Patsy said dubiously, and bit her lip.

"Greg? Who's Greg?"

"Nobody," she said in a small voice. There was no use telling Pete about Greg. He wouldn't understand at all.

. . . The station house was bare and brown and filled with hard, uncomfortable-looking oak chairs. Sargeant Hall was behind a table that had a protective iron mesh almost up to the ceiling.

"Why, sure," said Sargeant Hall. "That's the ring all right."

"It's been reported then?" Pete asked.

"Not an hour ago."

"What became of the guy?" Pete wanted to know.

Sargeant Hall shrugged. "Clean as a whistle. Couldn't book him without any evidence. But he's known. Been picked up before, and the next time maybe he won't be able to get rid of the stuff so fast."

"I don't understand," Patsy said. "Who reported the ring missing?"

"McNeil's Department Store," Pete explained with unusual gentleness, for Pete. "Your hero is a shoplifter. And the beefy criminal who was going to attack him was the store detective."

"But why did they let him get so far away with the ring? I mean, if they knew he took it, why didn't they stop him inside the store?"

"Because, kid," Sergeant Hall said, "according to law you can carry a piece of merchandise all over the store with you. It isn't until you take it outside, off the property, into the street, that you're in any trouble. When this guy knew he'd been spotted he had to get rid of the ring. Fast. To somebody who wouldn't argue. And you look," he winked at her, "like a romantic young girl. With illusions."

Patsy could feel her illusions crumbling one by one, painfully, somewhere inside her chest. There was only one thing more she had to know. She simply had to.

"Do you," she asked hesitantly, "know who he was? His name, I mean?" There was still one illusion left. Greg, the Greg she had created, was still Greg in spite of everything.

"Sure, we know. That feller is Percy Munk, better known in some circles as 'Dimples'."

Patsy turned away from the desk. "Thank you," she mumbled.

Outside, Pete didn't laugh as she had expected him to. There was one very comforting thing about Pete. When anything was over—it was finished.

They walked along in silence.

"Feel like another movie tonight?" he asked. "School reopens on Monday and this looks like the last chance for a while."

"I don't think so," Patsy said. "Thanks, anyway."

"Humphrey Bogart's at The Strand," Pete told her.

Patsy shook her head. "I don't feel like seeing Humphrey Bogart."

They continued a little way in silence. Pete took Patsy's hand.

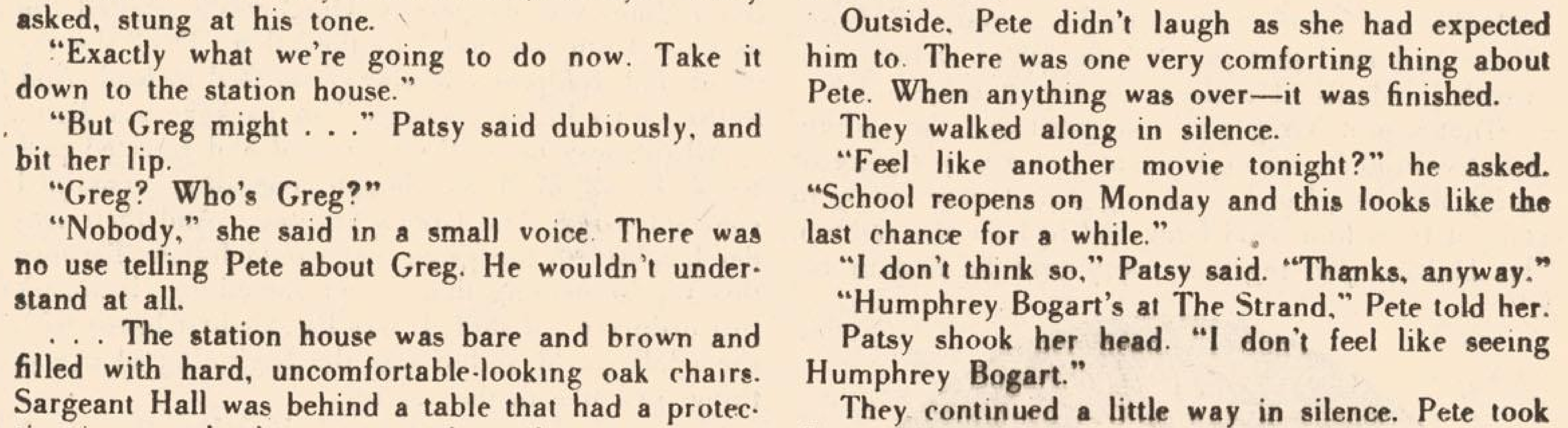
She looked up at him. "What have they got down at The Circle?"

"You wouldn't like it," Pete grinned. "A rootin', tootin' western."

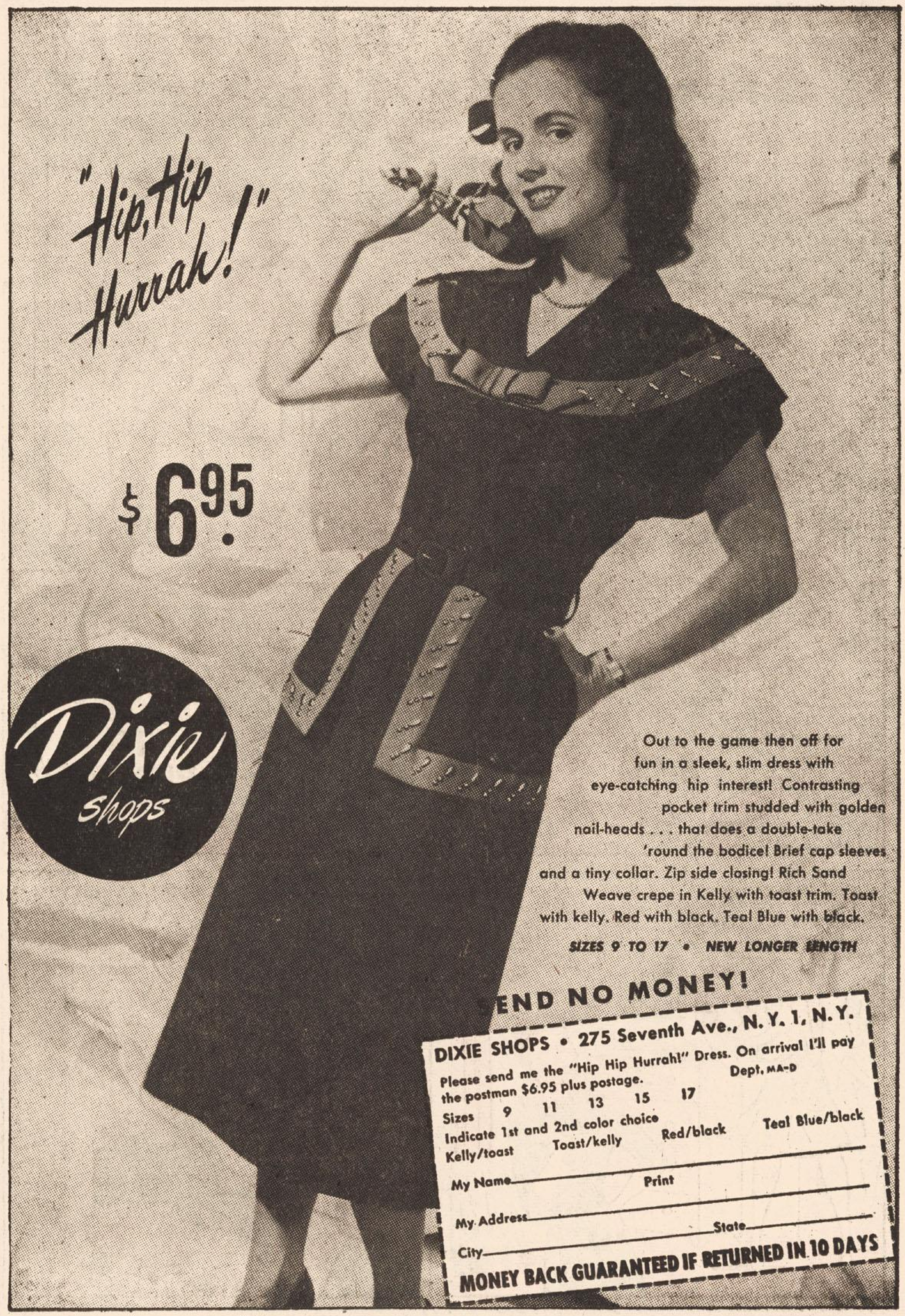
"Why, I'd love it," Patsy said vehemently. "I'd just love it."

And then, for no reason, they started to whoop with laughter.

THE END



Patsy looked at him, frightened now.
"A man gave it to me."



Out to the game then off for fun in a sleek, slim dress with eye-catching hip interest! Contrasting pocket trim studded with golden nail-heads . . . that does a double-take 'round the bodice! Brief cap sleeves and a tiny collar. Zip side closing! Rich Sand Weave crepe in Kelly with toast trim. Toast with kelly. Red with black. Teal Blue with black.

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Indicate 1st and 2nd color choice

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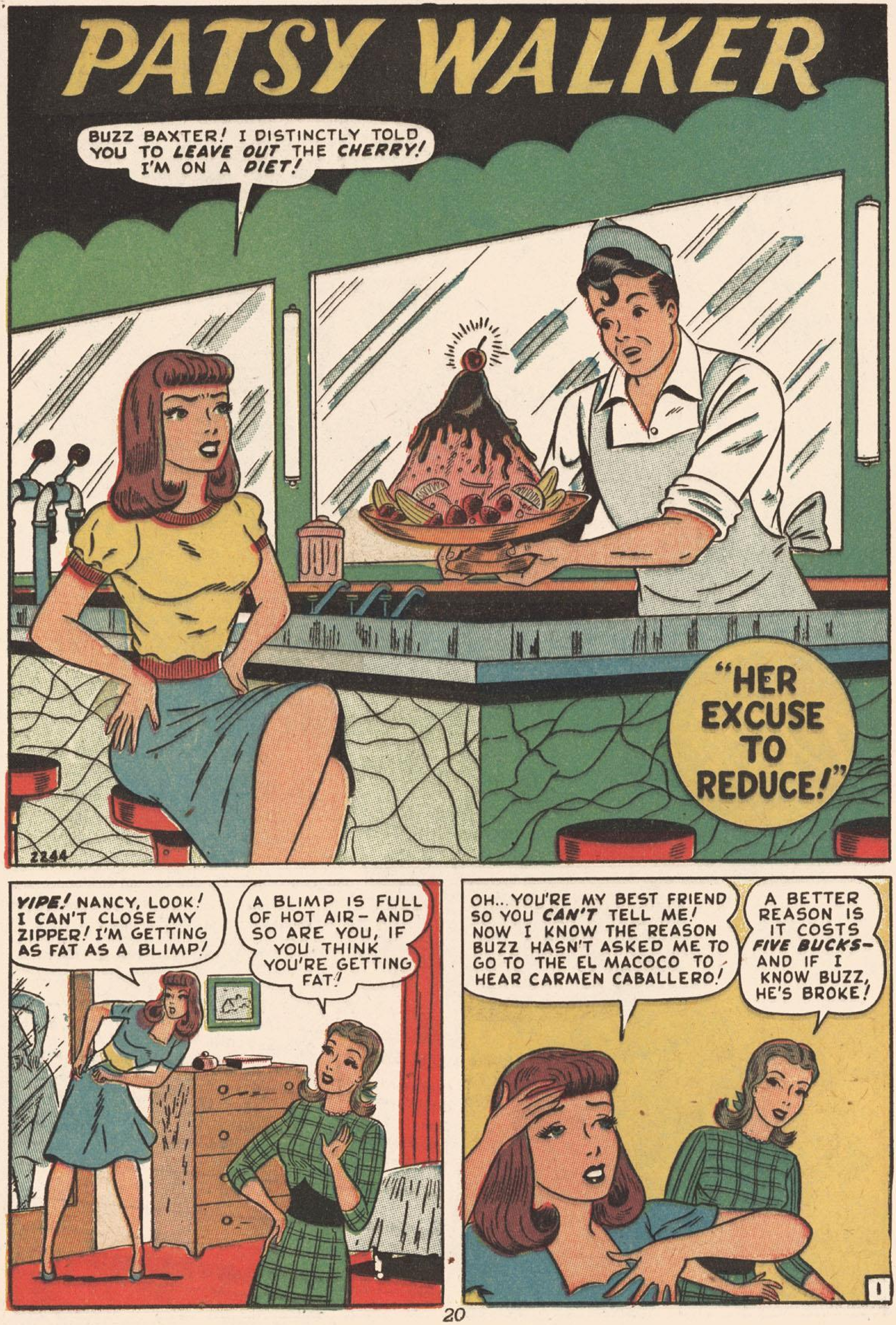
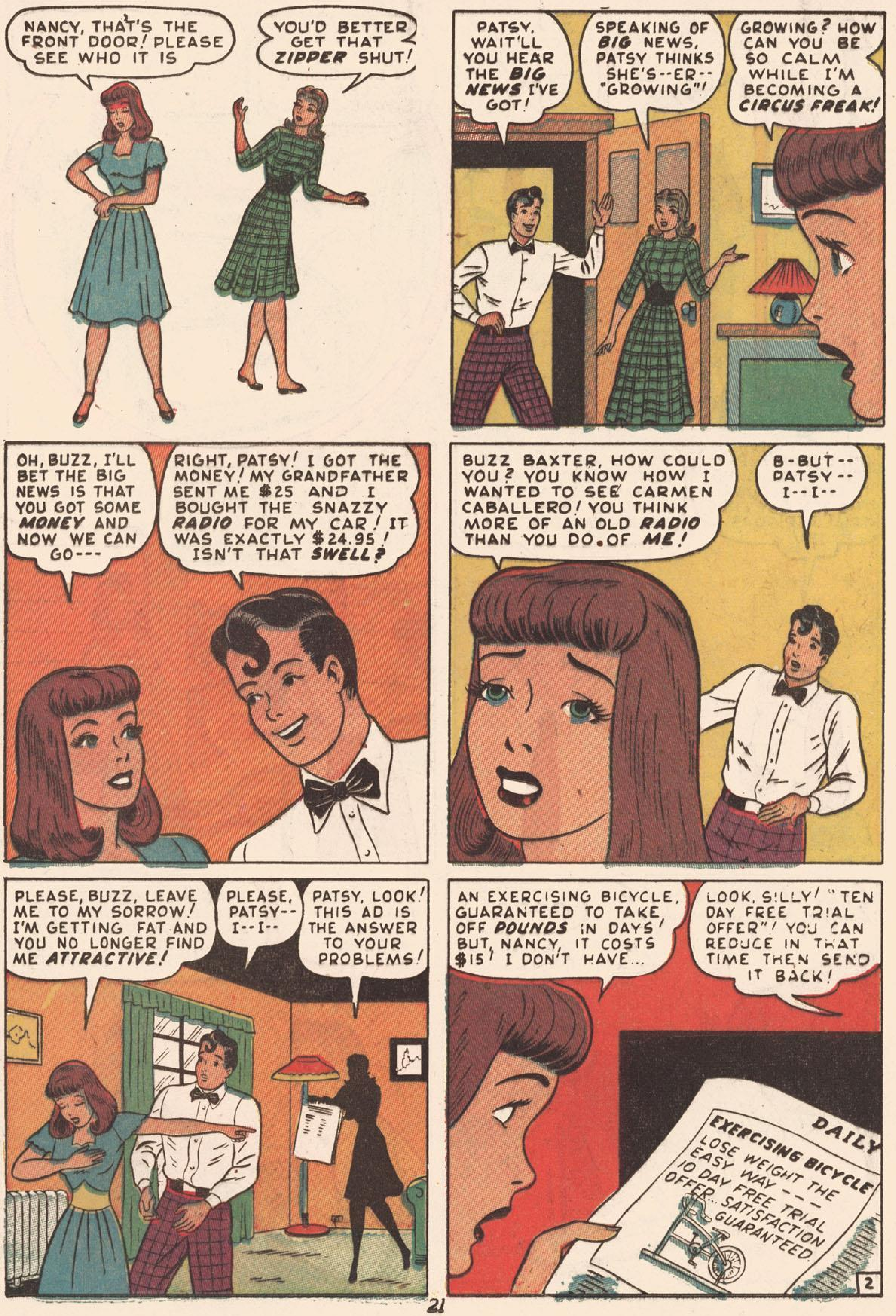
My Name __________ Print

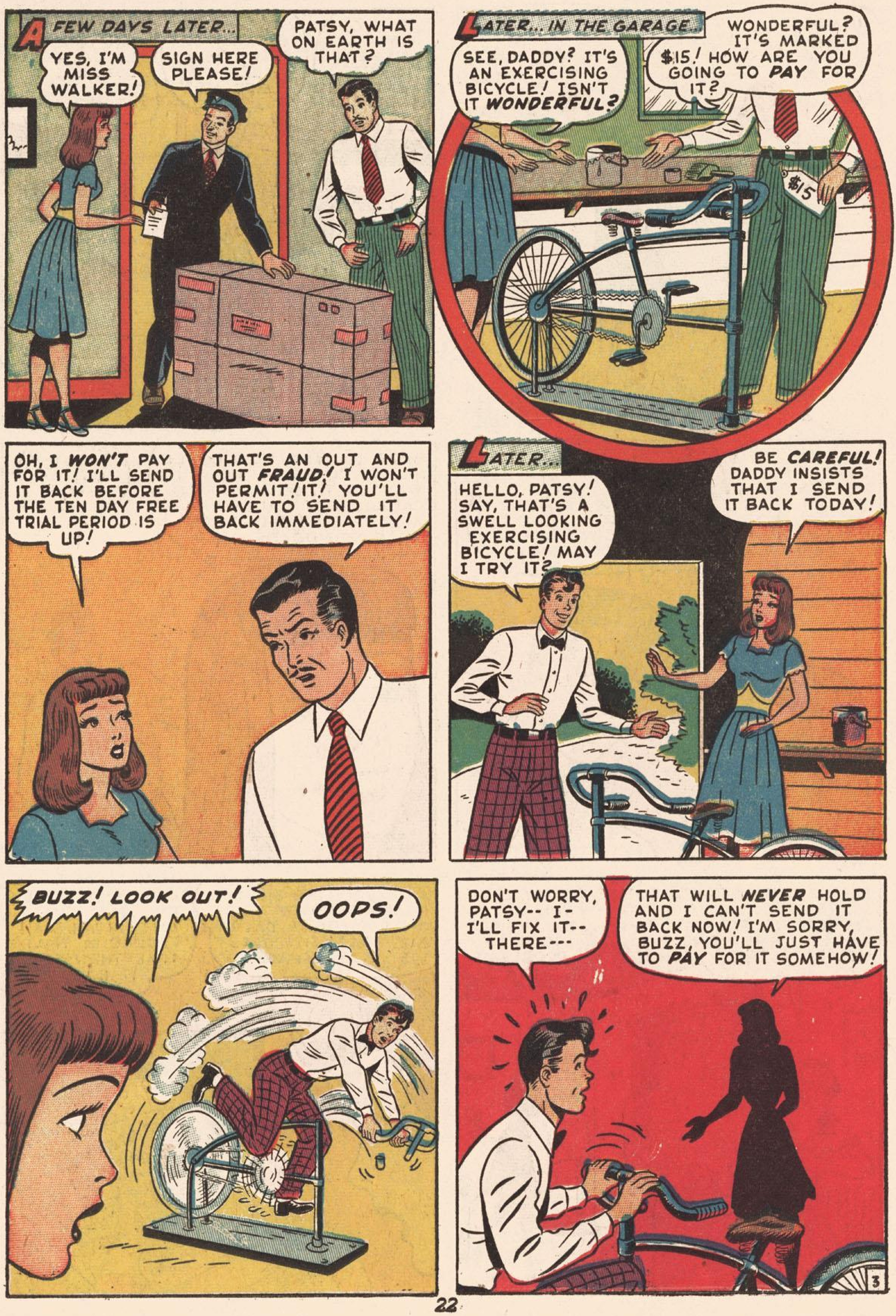
My Address __________

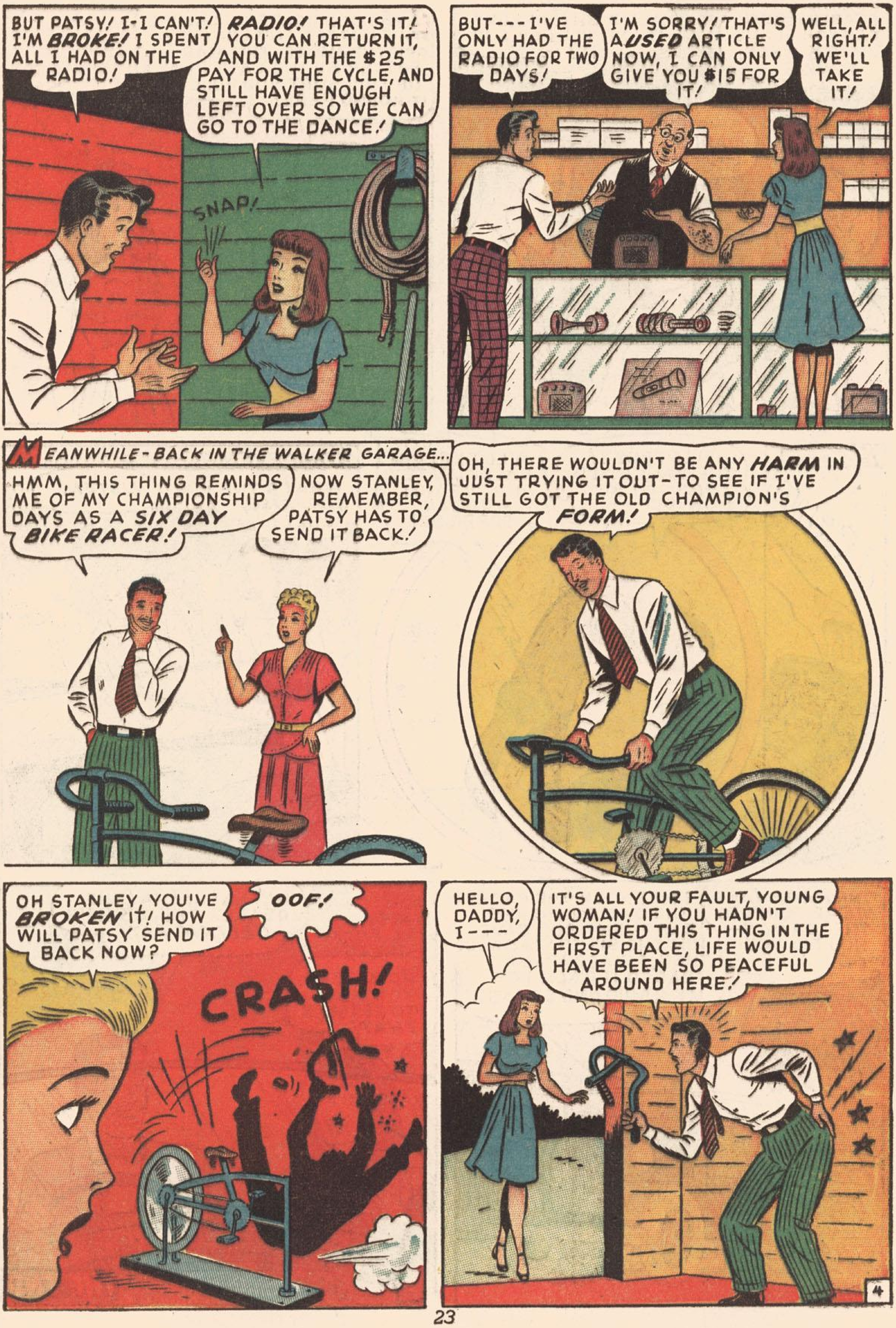
City __________ State __________

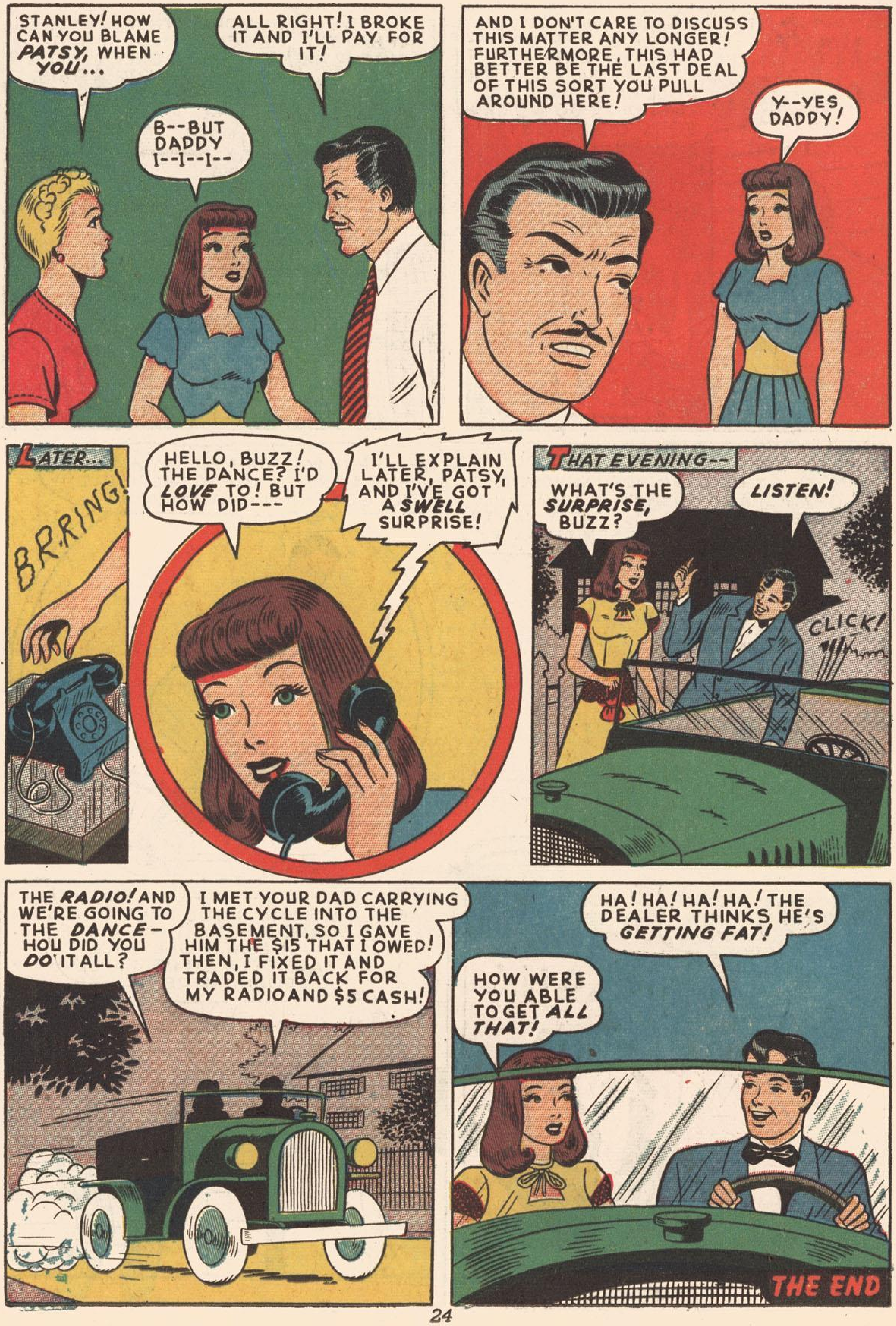
MONEY BACK GUARANTEED IF RETURNED IN 10 DAYS


PATSY WALKER
BUZZ BAXTER! I DISTINCTLY TOLD YOU TO *LEAVE OUT* THE *CHERRY!* I'M ON A *DIET!*
"HER EXCUSE TO REDUCE!"
2244
YIPE! NANCY, LOOK! I CAN'T CLOSE MY ZIPPER! I'M GETTING AS FAT AS A BLIMP!
A BLIMP IS FULL OF HOT AIR – AND SO ARE YOU, IF YOU THINK YOU'RE GETTING FAT!
OH... YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND SO YOU *CAN'T* TELL ME! NOW I KNOW THE REASON BUZZ HASN'T ASKED ME TO GO TO THE EL MACOCO TO HEAR CARMEN CABALLERO!
A BETTER REASON IS IT COSTS *FIVE BUCKS*– AND IF I KNOW BUZZ, HE'S BROKE!
1


NANCY, THAT'S THE FRONT DOOR! PLEASE SEE WHO IT IS
YOU'D BETTER GET THAT ZIPPER SHUT!
PATSY, WAIT'LL YOU HEAR THE BIG NEWS I'VE GOT!
SPEAKING OF BIG NEWS, PATSY THINKS SHE'S--ER--"GROWING"!
GROWING? HOW CAN YOU BE SO CALM WHILE I'M BECOMING A CIRCUS FREAK!
OH, BUZZ, I'LL BET THE BIG NEWS IS THAT YOU GOT SOME MONEY AND NOW WE CAN GO---
RIGHT, PATSY! I GOT THE MONEY! MY GRANDFATHER SENT ME $25 AND I BOUGHT THE SNAZZY RADIO FOR MY CAR! IT WAS EXACTLY $24.95! ISN'T THAT SWELL?
BUZZ BAXTER, HOW COULD YOU? YOU KNOW HOW I WANTED TO SEE CARMEN CABALLERO! YOU THINK MORE OF AN OLD RADIO THAN YOU DO OF ME!
B-BUT--PATSY--I--I--
PLEASE, BUZZ, LEAVE ME TO MY SORROW! I'M GETTING FAT AND YOU NO LONGER FIND ME ATTRACTIVE!
PLEASE, PATSY--I--I--
PATSY, LOOK! THIS AD IS THE ANSWER TO YOUR PROBLEMS!
AN EXERCISING BICYCLE, GUARANTEED TO TAKE OFF POUNDS IN DAYS! BUT, NANCY, IT COSTS $15! I DON'T HAVE...
LOOK, SILLY! "TEN DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER"! YOU CAN REDUCE IN THAT TIME THEN SEND IT BACK!
DAILY
EXERCISING BICYCLE
LOSE WEIGHT THE EASY WAY ---
10 DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER... SATISFACTION GUARANTEED.
2


A FEW DAYS LATER..
YES, I'M MISS WALKER!
SIGN HERE PLEASE!
PATSY, WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?
LATER... IN THE GARAGE..
SEE, DADDY? IT'S AN EXERCISING BICYCLE! ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?
WONDERFUL? IT'S MARKED $15! HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PAY FOR IT?
$15
OH, I WON'T PAY FOR IT! I'LL SEND IT BACK BEFORE THE TEN DAY FREE TRIAL PERIOD IS UP!
THAT'S AN OUT AND OUT FRAUD! I WON'T PERMIT IT! YOU'LL HAVE TO SEND IT BACK IMMEDIATELY!
LATER..
HELLO, PATSY! SAY, THAT'S A SWELL LOOKING EXERCISING BICYCLE! MAY I TRY IT?
BE CAREFUL! DADDY INSISTS THAT I SEND IT BACK TODAY!
BUZZ! LOOK OUT!
OOPS!
DON'T WORRY, PATSY-- I- I'LL FIX IT-- THERE---
THAT WILL NEVER HOLD AND I CAN'T SEND IT BACK NOW! I'M SORRY, BUZZ, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO PAY FOR IT SOMEHOW!
3


BUT PATSY! I-I CAN'T! I'M BROKE! I SPENT ALL I HAD ON THE RADIO!
RADIO! THAT'S IT! YOU CAN RETURN IT, AND WITH THE $25 PAY FOR THE CYCLE, AND STILL HAVE ENOUGH LEFT OVER SO WE CAN GO TO THE DANCE!
SNAP!
BUT---I'VE ONLY HAD THE RADIO FOR TWO DAYS!
I'M SORRY! THAT'S A USED ARTICLE NOW, I CAN ONLY GIVE YOU $15 FOR IT!
WELL, ALL RIGHT! WE'LL TAKE IT!
MEANWHILE-BACK IN THE WALKER GARAGE...
HMM, THIS THING REMINDS ME OF MY CHAMPIONSHIP DAYS AS A SIX DAY BIKE RACER!
NOW STANLEY, REMEMBER, PATSY HAS TO SEND IT BACK!
OH, THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY HARM IN JUST TRYING IT OUT-TO SEE IF I'VE STILL GOT THE OLD CHAMPION'S FORM!
OH STANLEY, YOU'VE BROKEN IT! HOW WILL PATSY SEND IT BACK NOW?
OOF!
CRASH!
HELLO, DADDY, I---
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, YOUNG WOMAN! IF YOU HADN'T ORDERED THIS THING IN THE FIRST PLACE, LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN SO PEACEFUL AROUND HERE!
4


STANLEY! HOW CAN YOU BLAME *PATSY*, WHEN *YOU*...
ALL RIGHT! I BROKE IT AND I'LL PAY FOR IT!
B--BUT DADDY I--I--I--
AND I DON'T CARE TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER ANY LONGER! FURTHERMORE, THIS HAD BETTER BE THE LAST DEAL OF THIS SORT YOU PULL AROUND HERE!
Y--YES, DADDY!
LATER...
BR-RING!
HELLO, BUZZ! THE DANCE? I'D *LOVE* TO! BUT HOW DID---
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER, PATSY, AND I'VE GOT A *SWELL* SURPRISE!
THAT EVENING--
WHAT'S THE *SURPRISE*, BUZZ?
LISTEN!
CLICK!
THE *RADIO!* AND WE'RE GOING TO THE *DANCE*-HOU DID YOU *DO* IT ALL?
I MET YOUR DAD CARRYING THE CYCLE INTO THE BASEMENT, SO I GAVE HIM THE $15 THAT I OWED! THEN, I FIXED IT AND TRADED IT BACK FOR MY RADIO AND $5 CASH!
HA! HA! HA! HA! THE DEALER THINKS HE'S *GETTING FAT!*
HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO GET *ALL THAT!*
THE END

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* * *

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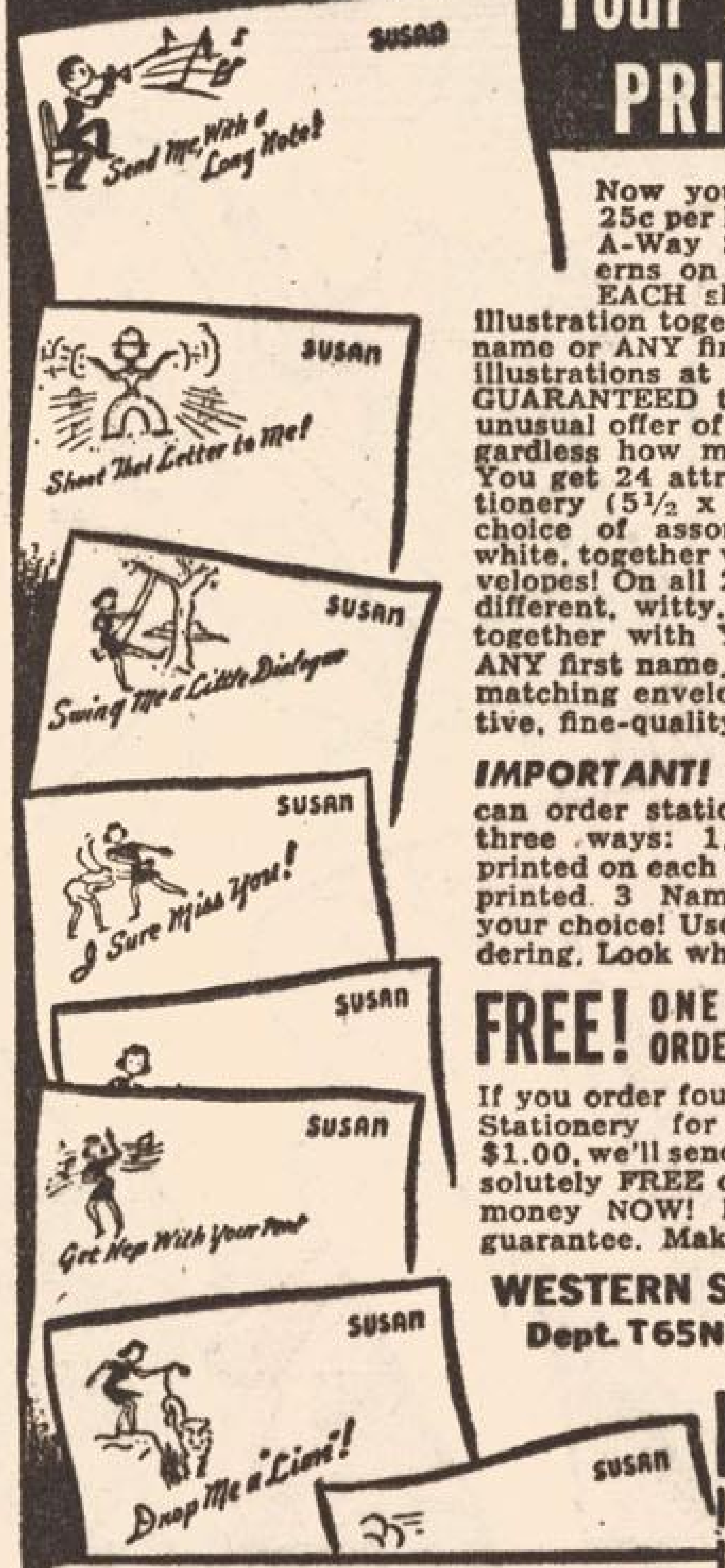
SUSAN
Send Me, With a Long Note!
SUSAN
Shoot That Letter to Me!
SUSAN
Swing Me a Little Dialogue
SUSAN
I Sure Miss You!
SUSAN
SUSAN
Get Hep With Your Pen!
SUSAN
Drop Me a "Line"!
SUSAN

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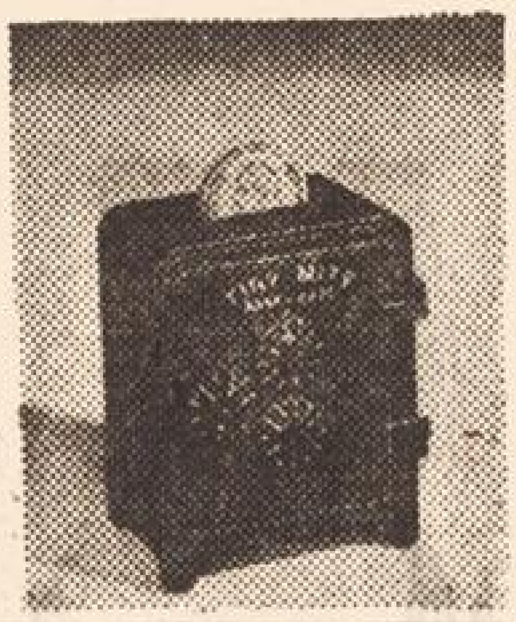

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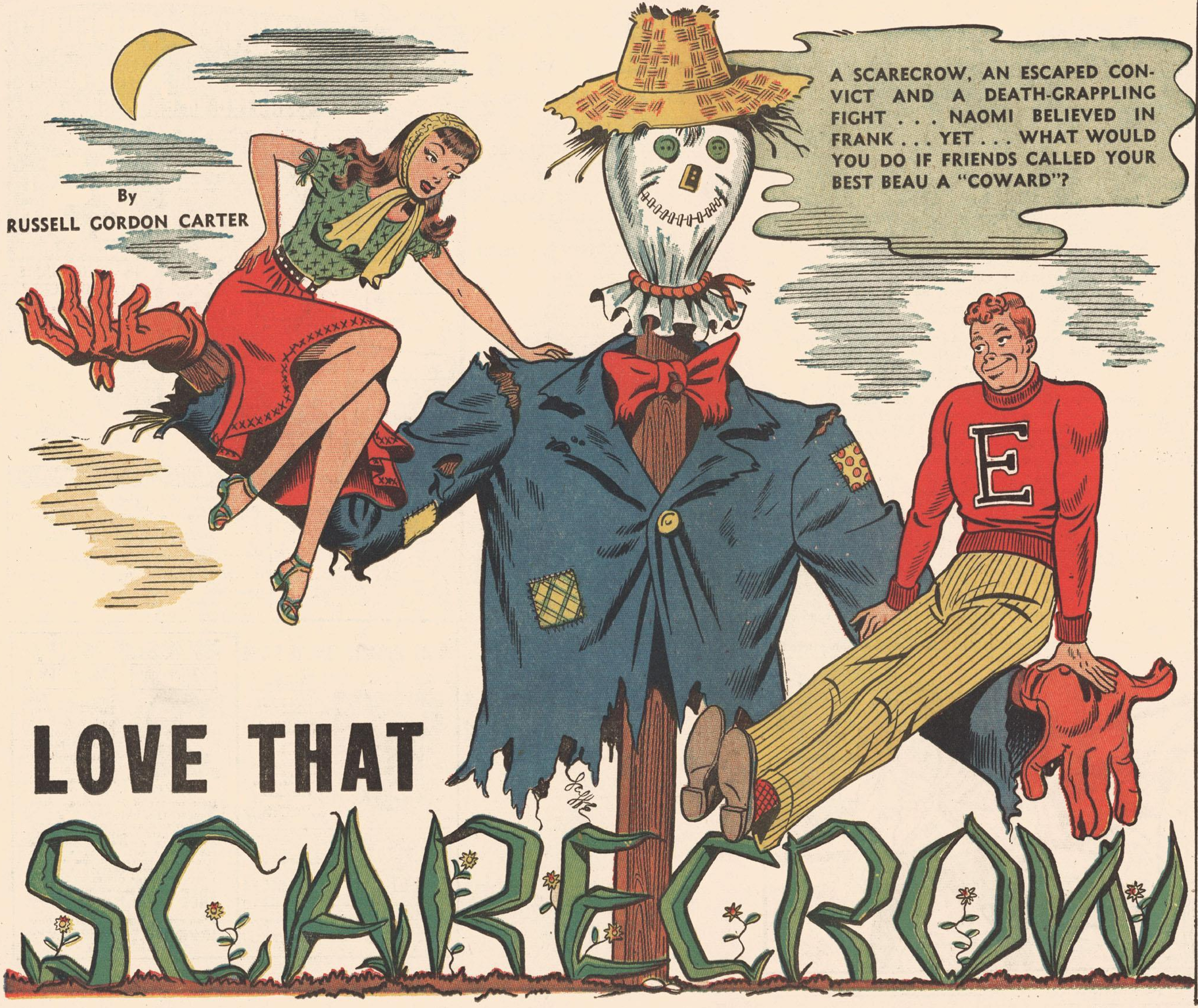
LOVE THAT SCARECROW

By

RUSSELL GORDON CARTER

A SCARECROW, AN ESCAPED CONVICT AND A DEATH-GRAPPLING FIGHT . . . NAOMI BELIEVED IN FRANK . . . YET . . . WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF FRIENDS CALLED YOUR BEST BEAU A "COWARD"?



"I'M sorry, Naomi, but I can't make it."

Naomi Hale's slim fingers tightened on the phone. It seemed that never in her life had she wanted anything so badly as she wanted to go to the school Halloween dance that evening with Frank Greely! "Why not, Frank?" she asked.

"Aw . . ." he began.

As he hesitated, she found herself remembering last week's football game with Centre Academy, and it seemed she could again see the opposing left end take a high pass and streak toward the Exton goal, with no one to stop him except Frank Greely. An instant later she was remembering the loud groan that went up as Frank missed the tackle and Centre scored the winning touchdown . . .

"Aw, I don't care about the dance," he added.

Naomi frowned. It wasn't that, of course. It was because he knew how unpopular he was, after missing that tackle . . . "Greely's yellow," she had heard several of the younger boys whisper, and Charley Rexford, one of the cheer leaders, had openly declared that a fellow who was afraid to tackle shouldn't try to play football. Naturally enough, Frank was desperately unhappy, and she knew that in order to hide his feelings he had pretended that he didn't care—which only made matters worse. Yet, she reasoned, if she could get him to go with her to the annual dance at Northvale she might somehow help to straighten things out.

"Listen, Frank," she pleaded, "a costume affair at the Barn is always fun . . ."

"Haven't a costume," he objected.

"Then go as a tramp! Wear old clothes . . ."

"Haven't any. Gave them all to relief."

She felt she was winning. "I've just thought of something!" she exclaimed. "I'll go as a gypsy and you go as a scarecrow! We'll pass one corner of Peterson's farm, and there's that old scarecrow of his—you can borrow the clothes. It'll be fun! Okay?"

She waited expectantly, and then at last came the longed-for response: "Well, all right, then."

. . . Beside him on her bike two hours later, wearing a gypsy scarf and a wide red skirt, Naomi breathed deeply in the clear frosty air as they followed the winding road to Northvale. "We're late," she said and pedaled harder.

As they came out of a patch of woodland, she swung to one side. "The scarecrow is just over that ridge," she said and, dismounting, led the way across a stubble field gleaming under a full moon.

Reaching the top, she stopped short, mouth open. "That's queer!" she exclaimed. Where the scarecrow had hung for so long, fluttering in the wind, nothing remained except the bare pole. "It was here this afternoon," she added. "I saw it!"

"What's that on the ground?" Frank asked. "See, near the pole?" They hurried down the slope. "Clothing," he said, lifting a discolored gray coat.

"Yes, but not from the scarecrow!" Naomi cried. "That's the kind of coat convicts wear!"

Frank gave a low whistle. "You're right!" he exclaimed. "And you know, Naomi, some of the farmers around here have prisoners working for them . . ."

"Yes . . ." she began, and then caught her breath as a tall, grotesque figure appeared from behind a distant straw stack and started to run toward the patch of woodland. "Look!" she gasped, seizing her companion's arm. "There goes the scarecrow!"

Frank stiffened, hands clenched at his sides. "Clever stunt," he muttered slowly as the figure disappeared in the wood. "Prisoner hides from guards, then swaps clothes with scarecrow . . ."

"But where can he go?" Naomi demanded. "He'll be caught, won't he?"

"Not if he can reach the railroad," Frank said. "That's where he's heading, and if he can hop a freight . . ."

In the valley beyond the road a train whistled.

"We ought to do something!" Naomi said.

"You're right, get to a phone—and quick!" As they raced back to where they had left their bikes, Frank added, "We passed a white farmhouse, remember? Ought to be a phone there."

Naomi could feel the violent pounding of her heart as she grabbed her bike. No thought now of a Halloween dance! Or even of trying to help a boy you liked better than any boy you had ever known! In a moment the two of them were speeding back through the patch of woodland.

They had just emerged into the full moonlight again when, glancing upward, she felt as if icy fingers had suddenly closed round her throat. There, ahead, on the bare hillside at the left of the road, stood the scarecrow figure staring at them—staring as if undecided what to do.

Suddenly he went racing down the slope toward the road.

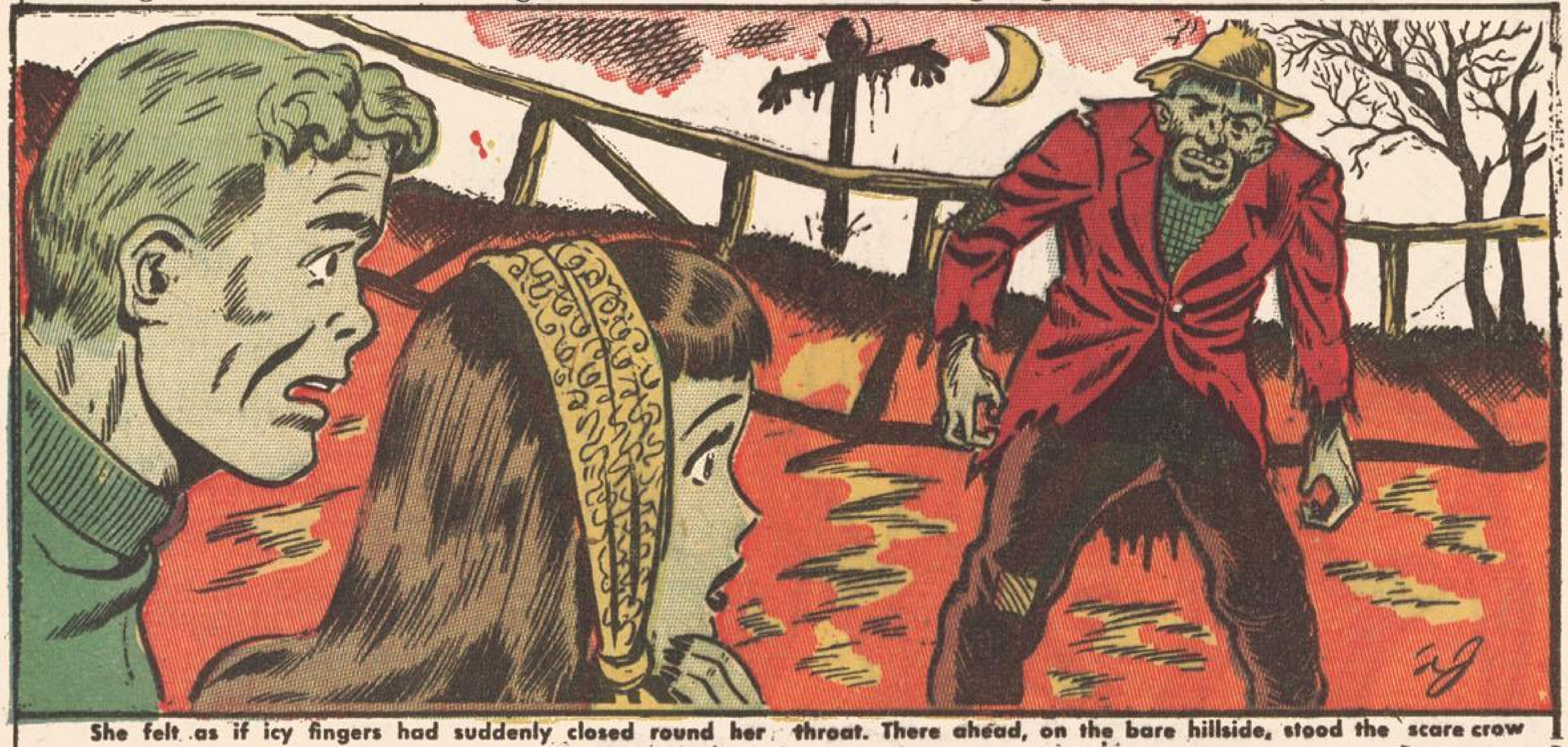
Jamming on the brake, Naomi brought her bike to a halt and dismounted, but to her amazement, Frank kept right on pedaling. She stared at him, wide-eyed, bewildered. What was he doing? Was he going to ride on to the farmhouse and leave her alone? She glanced toward the sloping field again. The man was running with long strides, his arms pumping—a big, powerfully built man. By the looks of things, he would cross only a few feet in front of Frank's speeding bike . . .

It was only when he reached the road and she saw the bike swerve and slacken, that she understood Frank's purpose. She clenched her hands as he leaped to the ground, the bike clattering, its wheels spinning. Then he was running, head low as in football. She took a step forward, her legs shaking.

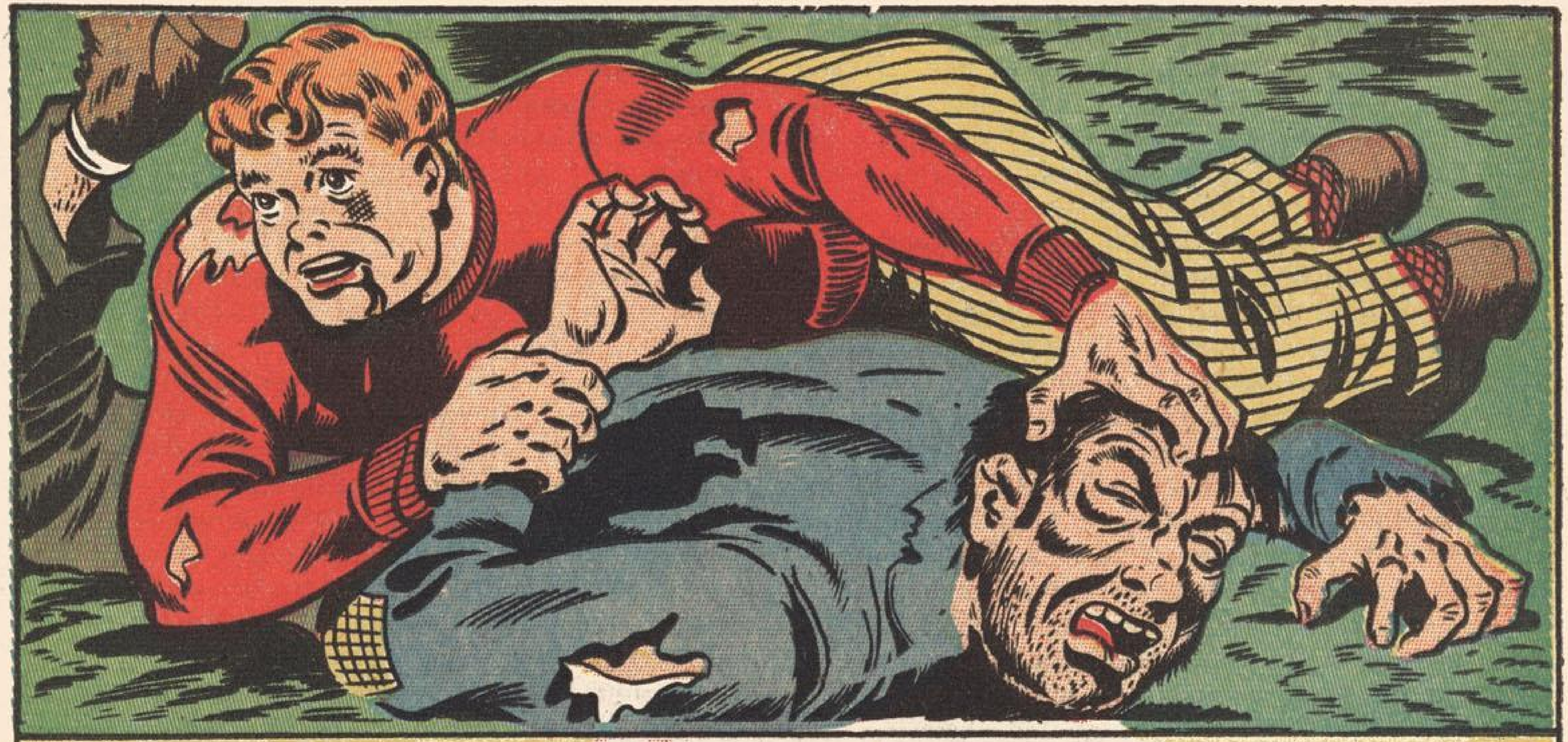
The man was more than halfway across the road when Frank hurled himself forward in a bone-shaking tackle. With cold hands pressed to her face, Naomi saw the two of them go down. She stood rigid, incapable of movement, while they thrashed about, now the one on top, now the other . . .

It was the sight of Frank's white face in the moonlight that restored her power of movement—the glistening, fiercely determined face of a boy fighting against heavy odds. A boy who needed help! She ran forward, not knowing what she might do, but resolved to do something!

They were in the ditch at the side of the road when she reached them: Frank struggling for a secure grip, the man fighting him off. Suddenly she uttered a



She felt as if icy fingers had suddenly closed round her throat. There ahead, on the bare hillside, stood the scare crow figure staring at them . . .



"I . . . I can hold him!" the boy gasped. "Get help! Ride, Naomi, as fast as you can!"

warning cry as the prisoner's hand darted outward toward a jagged stone. Before he could grasp it, she swept forward and snatched it out of his reach. A moment later Frank secured the grip for which he had been trying, and she saw the man's head go down, his arm, with Frank's fingers clamped to the wrist, bent awkwardly backward.

"I . . . I can hold him!" the boy gasped. "Get help! Ride, Naomi, as fast as you can!"

The wind sang in her ears while she ran to her bike, and then her dark hair was streaming from her forehead as she went whirling down the road, pedaling as she never had pedaled in her life—giving everything she had in the effort. Nevertheless, as trees and bushes flashed past, she was unable to rid her mind of a terrible thought: what if Frank should lose his grip on the man's arm?

It was still uppermost in her consciousness as she jumped off the bike and pounded along the path to the white farmhouse where lights were burning: "What if . . ." But this was no time for hysterics. She must tell her story calmly and quickly. A life might depend on it . . .

"Hello, what can I do for yuh?"

She had a clear view of the farmer as he stood in the doorway: a big man in shirt sleeves. Struggling to keep her voice from shaking, she told in short, clear sentences exactly what had happened.

"Come inside," he said. "My wife'll look after you while I an' my boy go up the road." And calling, "Joe, I need yuh!" he hurried out the door.

Half a minute later Naomi was with his wife in the spacious kitchen, her hands gripping the telephone. "State Police! . . . Hello? Hello?"

"'Twon't take 'em long to get here," the woman remarked, when a man's heavy voice came over the wire: "State Police."

Again Naomi had to fight for self-possession while she quickly told what had happened and then answered the brisk questions the man put to her. When she finally hung up she was hot and trembling.

"Let me get you a glass o' milk," the woman said.

Naomi had hardly finished drinking it when voices sounded outside. The woman hurried to the window. "They've got him!" she cried and then nodded with satisfaction as her husband came striding into the room, followed by the prisoner with his hands tied, then the son, then Frank, disheveled and mud-stained.

The farmer backed the man into a chair. "We got there just in time," he said to his wife. "Doubt if the lad could have held on another minute!"

Naomi met Frank's grateful eyes, then turned quickly toward the window as the farmer's wife said, "Here's State Police!"

Naomi could hear the dull throbbing of a motorcycle. As it drew swiftly nearer it swelled into a rhythmical roar, sending the echoes flying. Then it ceased with harsh abruptness. The son strode to the door and flung it open.

As a state trooper swung across the theshold, the farmer said, "Here's your prisoner, sir—and here's the girl and lad who deserve the credit!"

The trooper nodded, but made no immediate comment. It was only after he had slipped a pair of handcuffs on the man that he turned to Naomi and began to ask questions. This time she didn't have to struggle in order to speak calmly . . .

Upwards of 20 minutes later, after he had sped off with his prisoner, she and Frank were out on the road in front of the house. "No dance tonight!" Frank remarked emphatically as he picked up his bike.

"Why not?" Naomi asked.

"Too late."

"No, it isn't!"

He shook his head. "Besides, I haven't a costume," he added.

Same old objection, she thought! Aloud, she said, laughing, "You don't need one, you already look a little bit like . . . a scarecrow! Please, Frank," she added seriously, "I want to go! Won't you?"

He threw a leg across his bike. "All right—on one condition," he said quietly

"What?"

"That you won't tell anybody what happened."

She stared at him, knowing by his tone that he was in deadly earnest: knowing also just how he felt. She could almost hear him saying to her, "If you tell what happened, the gang'll think that's the only reason I came—to pose as a hero!"

"Do you promise?" he insisted.

"I . . . I'll try . . ."

"No, that won't do! You'll have to promise."

"I promise," she agreed reluctantly.

It was almost 11:00 o'clock and the dance was in full swing when they reached the Barn at Northvale. Under swaying bobbing lanterns that cast a mellow glow, strangely clad couples were weaving in and out on the crowded floor.

As Naomi and Frank stepped forth, Mary Eckart and Charlie Rexford, captain of field hockey, came gliding past, but neither of them spoke. Naomi bit her lip, then smiled up at her companion and held out her arms. Presently they were dancing. There were a few smiles of recognition, a few friendly glances, but for the most part it seemed to Naomi that the others deliberately ignored them.

When the music ceased, Frank said, "Aw, let's go home!"

She knew just how he felt, but she shook her head. With a glance toward Charley and Mary, she whispered, "Will you let me tell them? Just them, nobody else . . ."

"No!" he said firmly.

She took his hand and they made their way toward a corner where a group was gathered about a small radio. As they drew close, Naomi heard someone remark, "Eddie's trying to get more dope on that escaped convict." Then someone else called, "Hey, Eddie, anything new?"

Eddie Lowry, snub-nosed and diminutive, grinned upward and shook his head. "Won't be any more on that till morning," he replied and switched off the current.

"Yes, there will be, Eddie!" Naomi spoke impulsively—and so positively that the others stopped talking and stared at her.

"How do you know?" Eddie demanded challengingly.

Naomi tightened her lips, wanting to shout forth the whole story. Instead she said quietly, "Because he's been caught."

"No, he hasn't!" half a dozen voices shouted.

"Yes, he has!" Naomi's tone was still quiet.

"You're kiddin'!" Eddie said.

"No, I'm not."

"Who told you?" Eddie insisted.

Naomi was silent.

"Come on, Naomi, let's hop along!" Frank whispered, but she made no movement to go. Instead she glanced at her watch.

"Who told you?" Eddie repeated.

She remained silent.

Charley, standing beside Mary on the other side of the group, remarked with a hint of sarcasm, "Maybe it's a secret!"

Naomi glanced at her watch again. Two minutes to 11:00. "Switch it on again, Eddie," she said. "There's news at 11:00. Might be something. Only, of course, I can't promise . . ."

"Mystery stuff!" Charley jeered.

Others had joined the group, and looking at them under the soft light, Naomi was aware of a kind of growing tenseness, as if all of them half-expected something to happen. She thought, "Prob'ly it's too early for news of it. If only I hadn't made that promise to Frank . . ."

Eleven o'clock.

She strained forward as Eddie began to dial . . . "Good evening" . . . There it was, the local broadcast . . . "Northvale" . . . She caught her breath . . . "An escaped convict, who had been working on the farm of H. J. Peterson, was captured a little more than half an hour ago, thanks to the courage and quick wit of two high school students, Naomi Hale and Frank Greely. The two of them, juniors at Exton High, were on their way to the annual Halloween dance at Northvale when they encountered the prisoner, who had donned the clothes from a scarecrow. After young Greely, who plays football for Exton, had brought him down with a flying tackle, his girl companion bicycled for help and then summoned State Police, who promptly took the prisoner into custody . . ."

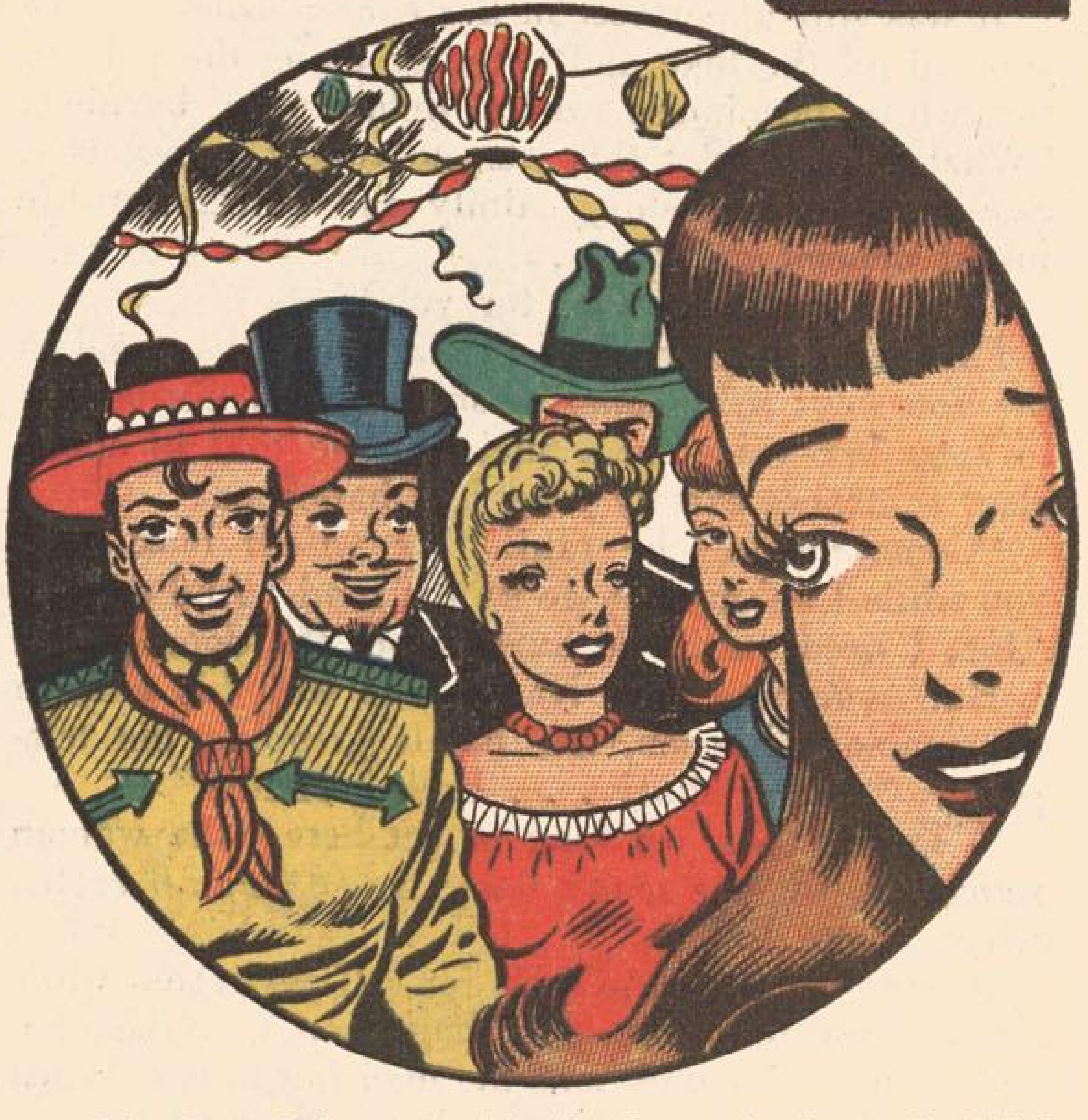
Eddie blinked his eyes. "What d'ye know!" he gasped.

With her heart beating exultantly, Naomi was vividly conscious of the sudden breathless silence all round her. Then, "Gosh!" she heard Charley exclaim, and there was no mistaking the profound respect in his tone. A moment later he came striding forward, lips parted, hand outstretched. As he seized Frank's hand and shook it, it seemed to her everyone began to talk at once.

"Naomi, weren't you terribly scared?" Mary asked as she looked at her admiringly.

"Yes, I was," Naomi admitted. "But I don't think Frank was! Anyway, I wish you all could have seen that tackle!" she added in a loud voice—and looking into their eager, friendly faces, she knew the full joy of triumph.

THE END



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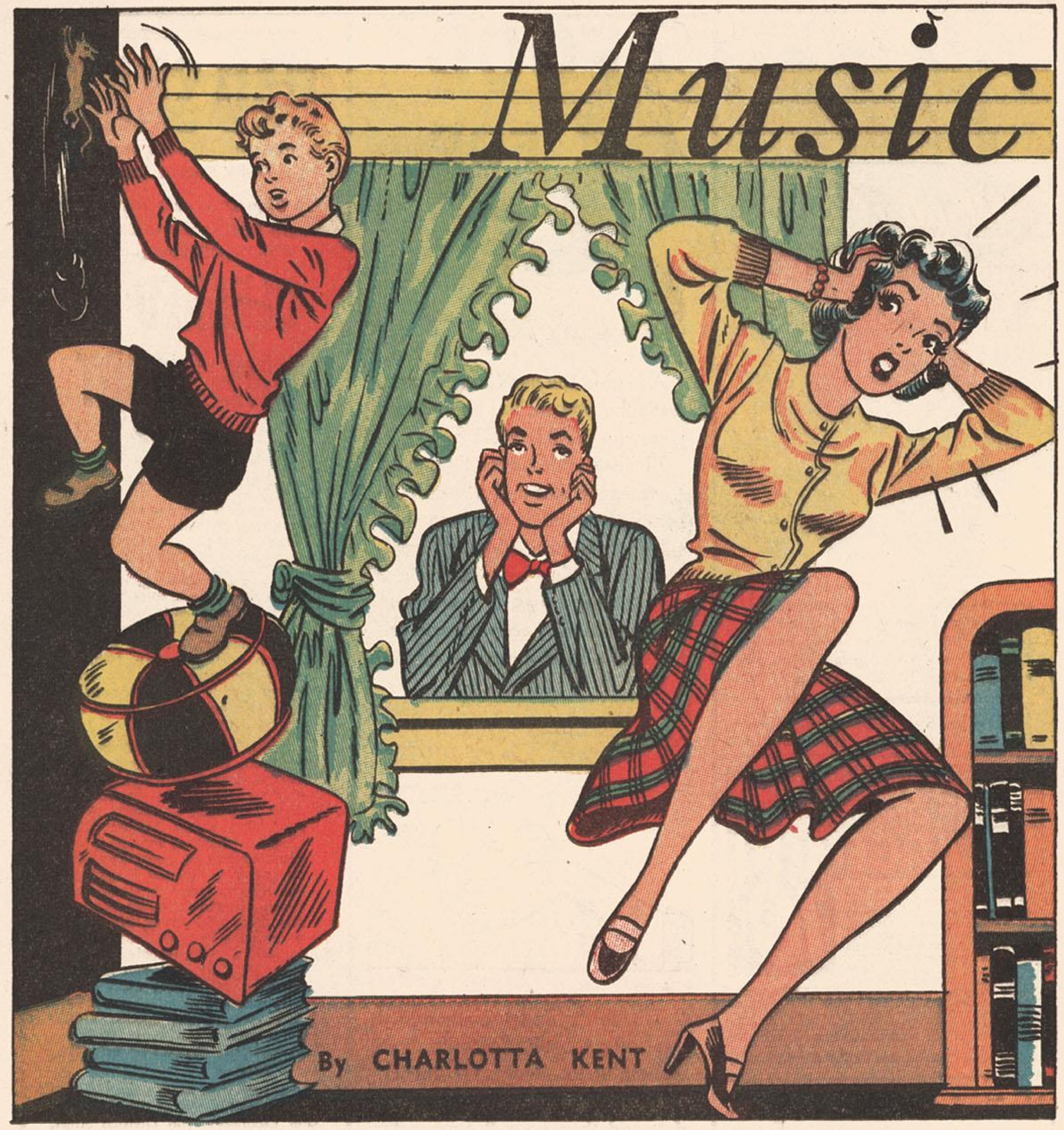
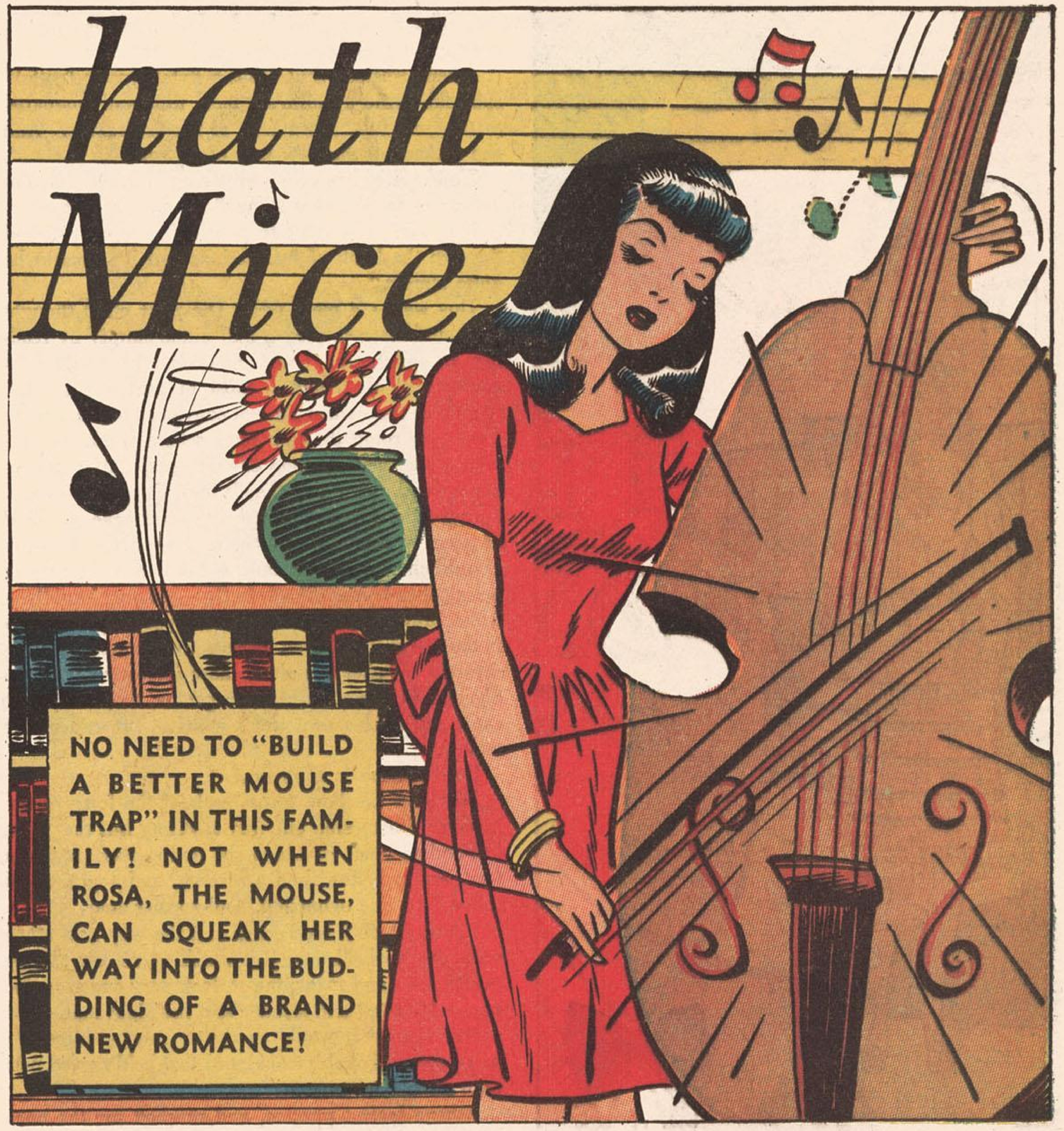
Music hath Mice



By CHARLOTTA KENT



NO NEED TO "BUILD A BETTER MOUSE TRAP" IN THIS FAMILY! NOT WHEN ROSA, THE MOUSE, CAN SQUEAK HER WAY INTO THE BUDDING OF A BRAND NEW ROMANCE!

"The new boy next door was in school today," I said. "He's in my class."

"That's nice," replied mother, who adores these daily after-school reports on the state of our household and its various members and neighbors. Mother is an invalid and must stay in bed most of the time, so it's up to me—Desdemona Taylor—to be the eyes and ears of her world, as they say in the newsreels. I'm the oldest of the family—17—and mother calls me her "deputy" And she scolds me when I say that I'm the Ugly Duckling, though she must know it's the truth. I've inherited her snub nose and round face but not, I'm afraid, her saintly serenity.

"His name is John Tucker," I went on. "And he's awfully stuck up. Doesn't talk to anyone. A real conceited bore."

"Not everyone has the Taylor faculty for telling all in the first five minutes," observed mother, with gentle irony.

I went on with the news. "And Rosa Bonheur is hoarding nesting material again." Rosa Bonheur is the wife of Nick Carter, and both of them are white mice belonging to my brother Claude, who is 12 and resembles a red-headed sheep dog."

"Where *is* Claude?" asked mother.

"Down in the basement, building a new house for Rosa."

"And Athene?"

"She isn't home from school yet. I can't imagine what's keeping her" Athene is 14, and the genius of the family. There isn't anything she can't do—except carry a tune. And she's lovely, too, with her straight black hair and straight features. My hair is black, too, but unruly. And Athene will never have to wear my dresses when she gets a little older, because they'd be too short and too wide. Like me—short and wide."

I glanced out the window as I spoke, and nearly dropped in my tracks. "Oh, here she comes now," I said. "She's carrying something."

"Her books, probably," said mother.

"It looks more like a piano."

"A piano! You're exaggerating, Desdemona."

"Well, it's bigger than Athene is," I argued. "But it can't be a piano," I conceded, "or Athene wouldn't be able to carry it."

I ran to the door to let Athene in. Her face was flushed and her eyes shone.

"Look, Des," she said. "They *gave* it to me!" And she peeled down the gray cloth cover that hid the thing.

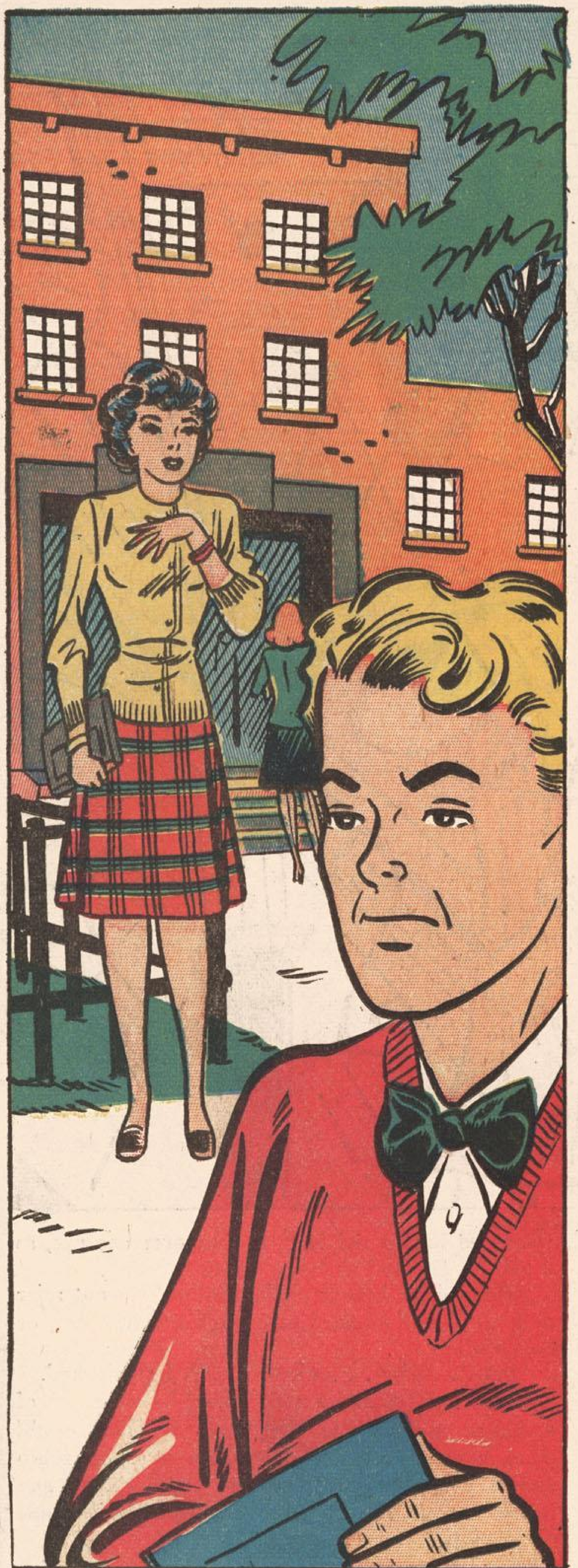
"A bull fiddle!" snorted Claude, who had just wandered in, his red bang of hair over one eye, as usual.

Athene drew herself up haughtily. "Do *not* refer to it as a bull fiddle, Claude. It's a contrabass, or bass violin."

"But . . . why . . . where . . .?" I stammered.

"They gave them out after school—a whole set of orchestra instruments. The Women's Club bought them, because they want to encourage musicianship among young people. And you could choose any instrument you wanted! After you passed the aptitude test, that is."

"But, Athene!" I wailed. "Why didn't you pick something a little more . . . ah . . . aesthetic? A flute, or a violin, or something like that." I could just picture Athene's black hair above the silvery slim-



I thought of John Tucker and the way he'd stood just watching us, not talking to anyone . . .

ness of a flute, or her lovely dark eyes dancing as she tucked a violin lovingly under her chin.

Athene was scornful. "But a flute's just a tootle!" she said. "And a violin's a mere thin wail compared to the fine, full-bodied tone of the contrabass." And she picked up the bow that came with it.

Claude fixed her with a glittering blue eye. "You're not going to *play* that thing!" he said, aghast.

"Of course I'm going to play it. I've already looked through the book of instructions and it seems to be quite simple."

This wasn't a mere pose. The poor child thought she could learn to play a bull fiddle simply by reading an instruction book. You see, she really is a genius. For that matter, most of the time I think Claude is, too—when I'm not convinced he's a demon. They just romp through their school work, while I plod along, getting good enough grades by studying like a fiend. Some day they'll both be great painters. I want to be a writer, though I'll never have any kind of talent to compare with theirs. Honestly, sometimes I could chew my fingernails as I watch Athene doing her algebra homework perfectly—and very rapidly—while drawing pencil sketches of people and things in the margins and even between the examples. Father says the sketches are much more important than the algebra. But then, father is a genius, too, even if he can't add up his own check stubs at the end of the month.

But—Athene is tone deaf.

She drew the bow across each of the four strings in turn. What came out was anything but the "fine, full-bodied tone" of which she had spoken. It was a wail, and a bellow, and a screech, and a grunt—all rolled into one agonizing, soul-searing roar.

I thought of John Tucker and the way he'd stood around school all day, just watching us, not talking to anyone—and managing to look very superior and bored. He's tall and slender and has light hair—in a cocker spaniel it would be called honey-colored. By now he was probably convinced that he'd moved next door to a booby-hatch.

Athene looked puzzled, and reached for the book of instructions.

Father came hurrying from his studio, and stopped short on seeing us. "Oh, I thought there was an accident in the street," he said. Claude howled. But I couldn't laugh. I was picturing a succession of days filled with dismal wailings such as Athene had produced—and just at a time when an interesting new boy had appeared on the scene. I could have wept.

Athene tried it again. The results were, if anything, worse than before.

"Do you mind telling me," I asked, "how you ever passed an aptitude test in music?"

Athene's gaze was as innocent as a bunny's. "Oh, I didn't have to," she explained. "I was so enchanted with *all* of the instruments that I couldn't make up my mind which I wanted, until finally they were all gone but this one, and Mr. Haviland said he was blessed if he knew how to give an aptitude test for a bass violin! I assured him I'd be delighted to take it."

A half hour's scratching and sawing enabled Athene to produce an agonizing scale of sorts. But she wasn't satisfied.

"Frankly, Des, I'm puzzled," she admitted, finally. "There must be something in the instruction book that I didn't digest properly the first time I read it."

I thought of Athene's tone deafness, of the frightful monotone in which she sometimes hums what she fondly thinks is a tune. But I didn't say anything.

"Yes, I'm sure that's it," Athene decided. "I'll put the contrabass aside for a few days while I study the book of instructions more thoroughly. Then, when I've mastered it, I'll play for you."

Well! The peace was wonderful—while it lasted.

The fateful day finally came, when Athene laid down the book and announced that she had mastered it. I didn't doubt her for a minute. Probably at that point Athene could have written a 10,000 word thesis on the origin, past, present and future of the bass violin. But could she play it?

Mother came in and lay on the davenport for the occasion; father left the picture he was painting; and Claude hopped about like a restless cricket. I felt awful, because I had seen John Tucker reach his house just ahead of me. Perhaps I should have hurried a little more and walked with him those last few blocks. After all, we *are* next-door neighbors! But if he'd really wanted to, *he* could have slowed those long legs of his and walked with *me*.

Athene's brow was serene and untroubled as she took the fiddle from its resting place beside the piano. She opened the instruction book to a simple melody, gave the bow a professional flourish, and drew forth the first squeak.

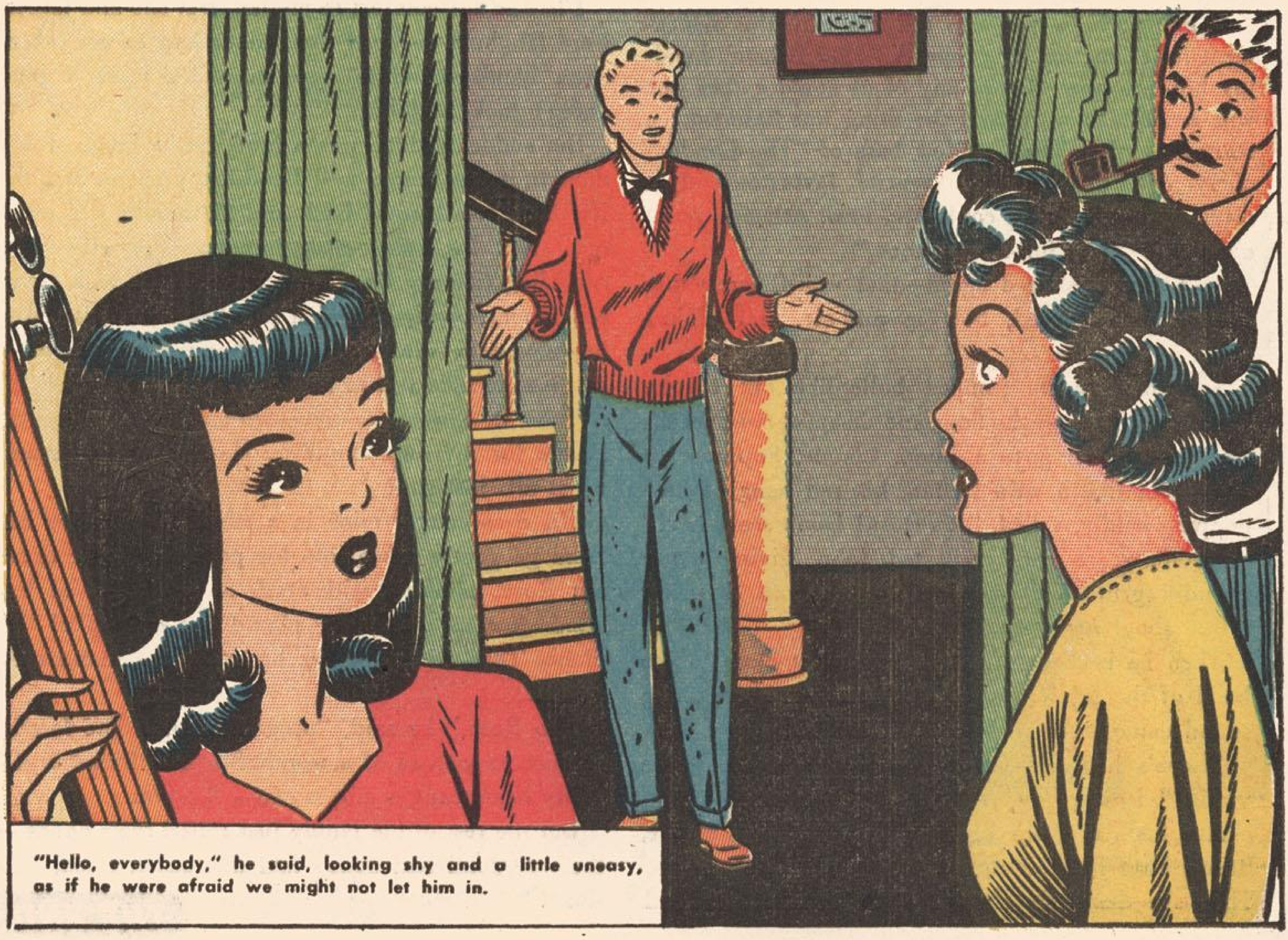
It was a funny squeak, not at all like the agonized sounds she had produced the day she brought the fiddle home. Athene seemed a little taken aback.

"I don't think it should sound like that," she said.

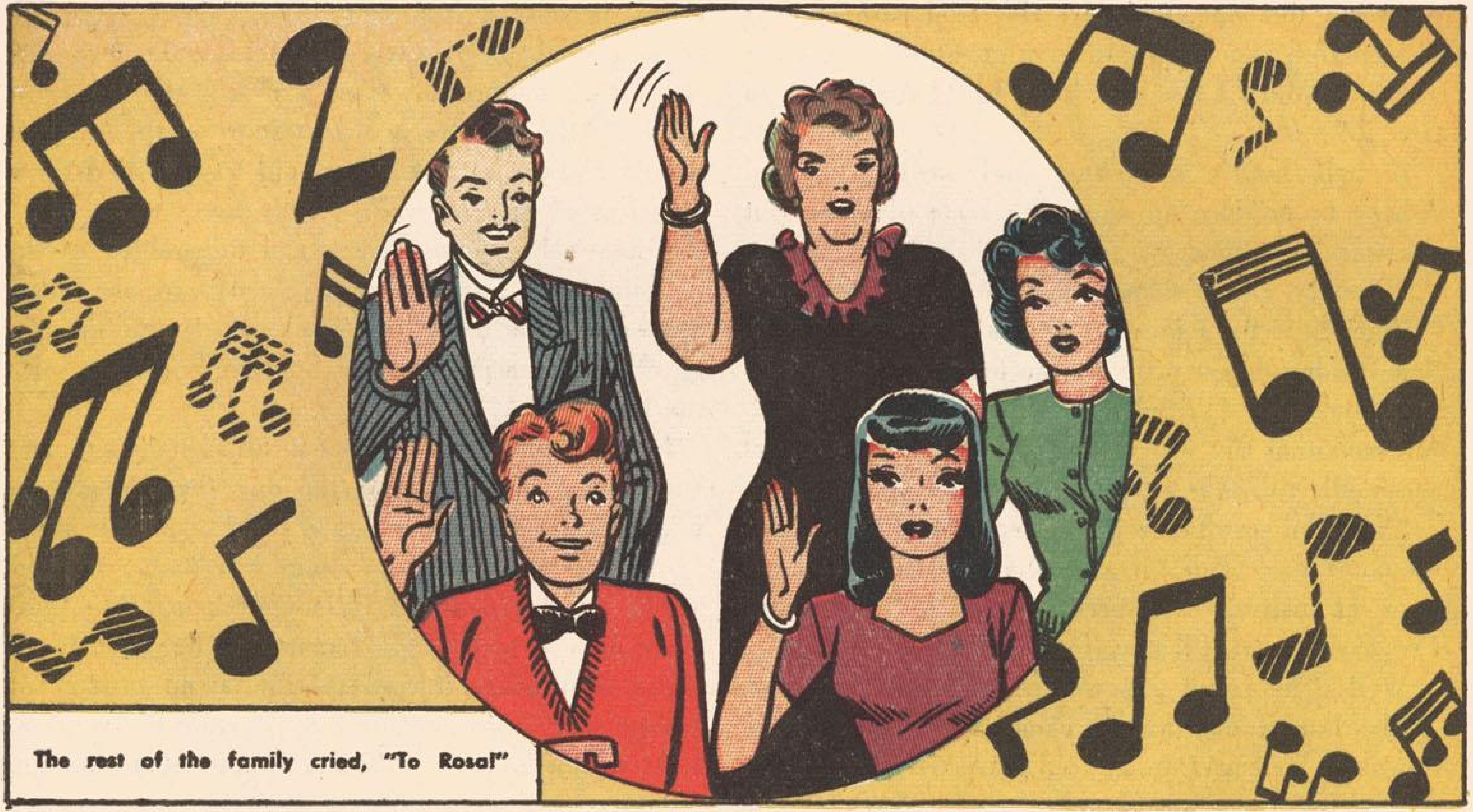
She tried it again, a little apprehensively. Again there was a squeak. It seemed to be a curiously soprano-ish sound for so substantial an instrument. I wondered, miserably, if I could close the windows between our house and the Tucker's without offending Athene.

Athene did something to the bow and then advanced upon the fiddle again. You could see she had determined to be firm with the thing.

But before she had so much as *touched* it there was another squeak, accompanied by a skittering sound deep in the body of the fiddle!



"Hello, everybody," he said, looking shy and a little uneasy, as if he were afraid we might not let him in.



The rest of the family cried, "To Rosa!"

That was the moment John Tucker appeared in the open doorway.

"Hello, everybody," he said, looking shy and a little uneasy, as if he were afraid we might not let him in. "I thought I heard a bass violin! I used to play one of those in the high school orchestra back home."

"Then perhaps you can tell me why this instrument isn't functioning properly," said Athene, handing him the bow. Before any of us could gather our wits enough to warn him the thing was haunted, he started to play. The first few bars of "The Londonderry Air" it was—my favorite favorite—and it sounded wonderful! I could see, now, Athene's point about the "rich, full-bodied tone."

And then it started again—that weird, scratching sound. John paused, bow in mid-air, and looked down in surprise.

Something white jumped bullet-like out of the fiddle, raced across the floor and disappeared beneath the piano. John gave a jump. Claude, hopping up and down like a wild Indian, his red bang of hair flopping wildly, yelled, "It's Rosa! Don't scare her!"

"Don't scare *her*," repeated John, giving me a friendly grin that wrinkled up his nose divinely. "How about *her* not scaring *us?*"

Then he cocked his head and put it close to the body of the fiddle. Sure enough, a faint, scratching sound came from within.

"Rosa's had her babies in the fid—I mean the violin!" I said.

At which, as if she had some super-human power, Rosa's head blinked round the corner of the piano. Then she discreetly shuffled cross the floor toward John. I held my breath. Rosa . . . well, Rosa . . . is a *schemer!*

Then she did it! Up she jumped in one swift leap—right into John's pocket!

That, I figured, was the end. I mean, the end of "what might have been" between John and myself.

I looked for comfort to mother. But she and father were laughing so hard that father had to get out a clean handkerchief to wipe away his tears. I just daren't look at John.

But suddenly there was a loud, husky laugh. John thought it was funny, too! I sneaked a glance at him. His head was thrown back and his mouth was wide open and his eyes—most important of all—were twinkling like my favorite star. He *didn't* look *aloof* any longer, or *superior*, but just like a nice, friendly boy-next-door who walks you home from school—and maybe asks you to the Senior Dance.

Then it dawned on me—with a little twinge of shame for my own stupidity. He hadn't been stuck up at all. Just shy!

His eyes caught mine in a wink. Then I saw his hand go gently down into his pocket. And he drew out Rosa, blinking wide-eyed, on the palm of his hand. Just as gently, he placed her on top of the piano. Then he waved his hand—in the manner of a toast.

"To Rosa," he said, "progenitor of a fine family of mice as well as of a wonderful, new friendship!"

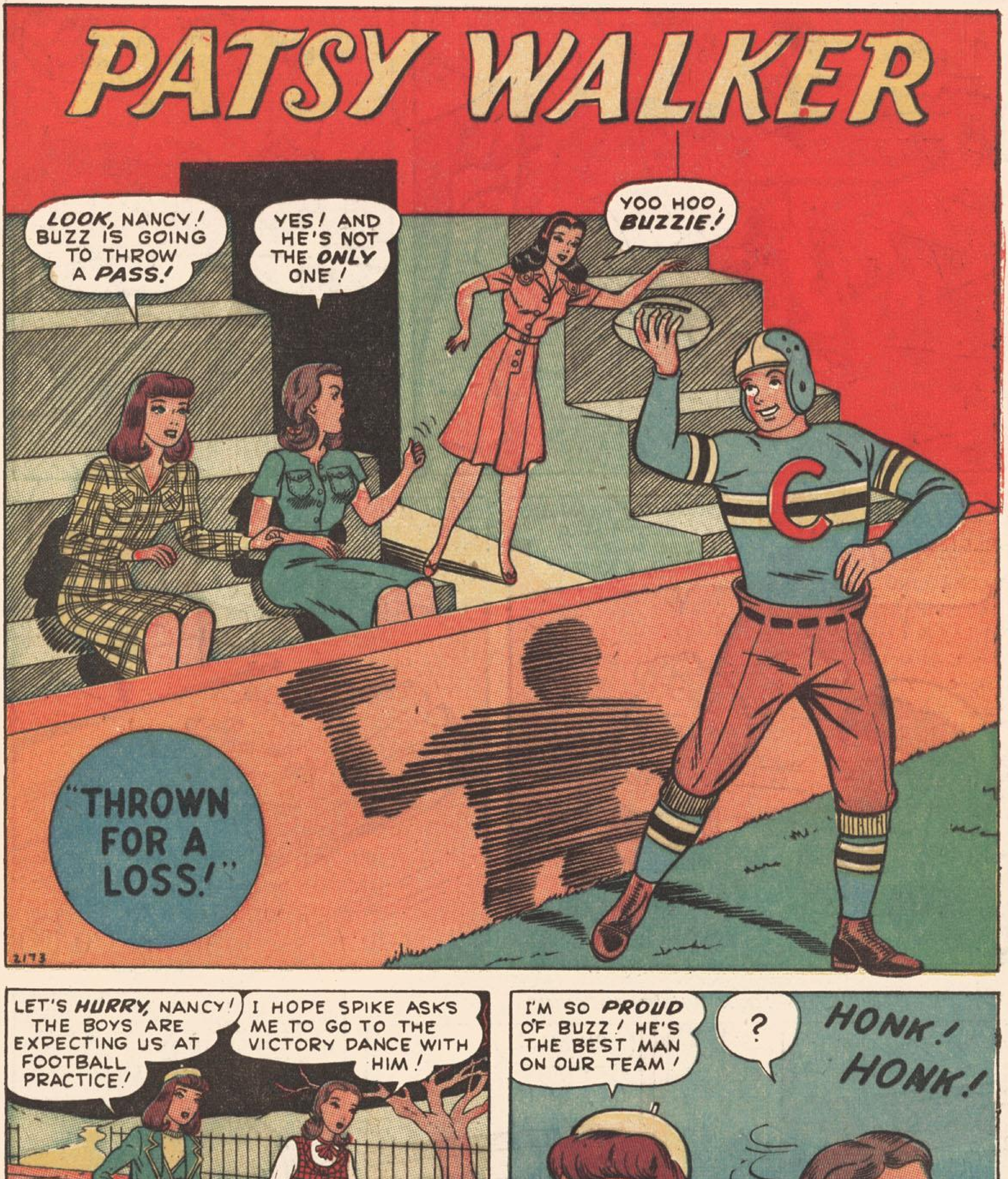
My heart caught midway in a flip-flop.

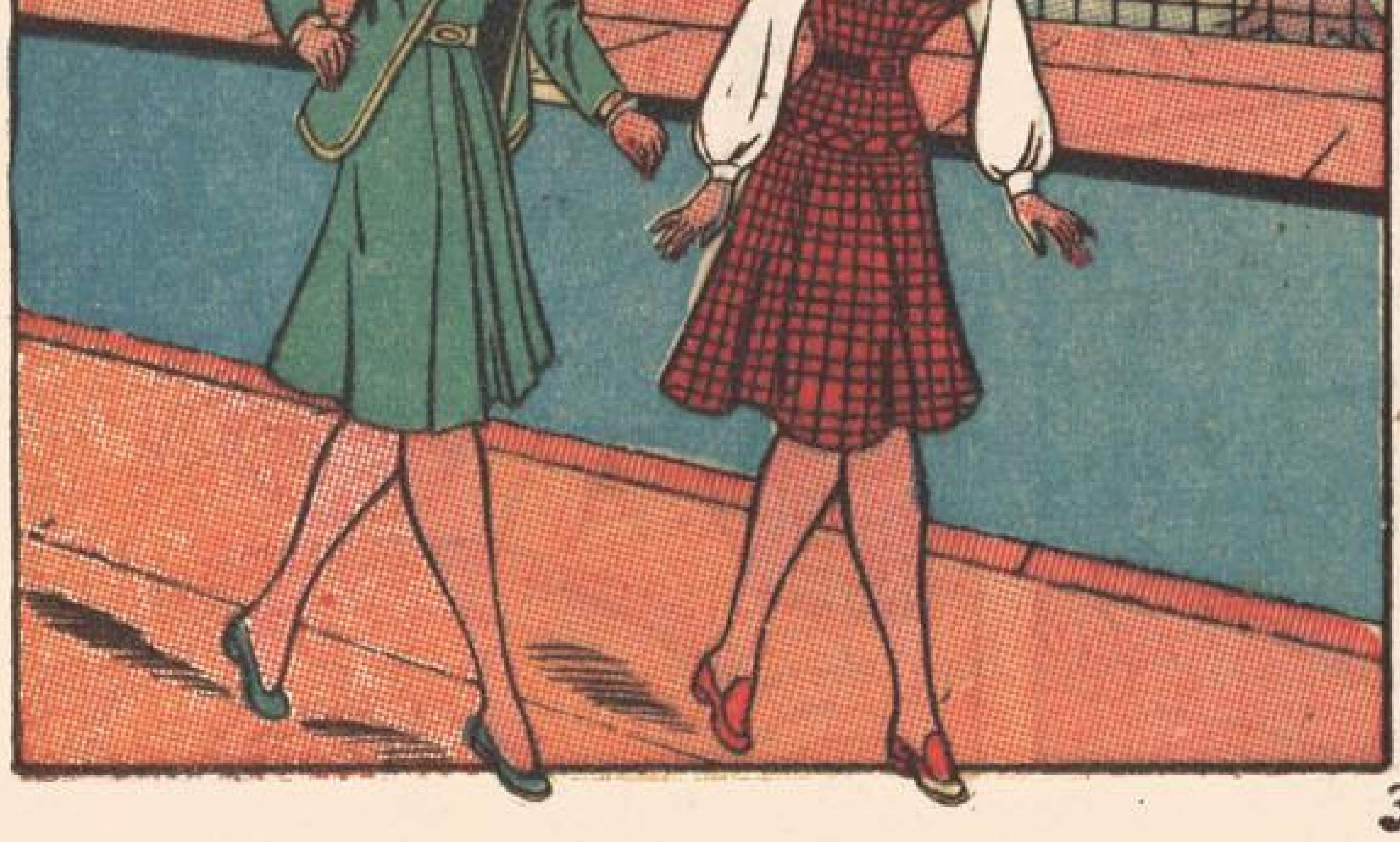
But the rest of the family just raised their hands—the way John had done—and in unison, cried, "To Rosa!"

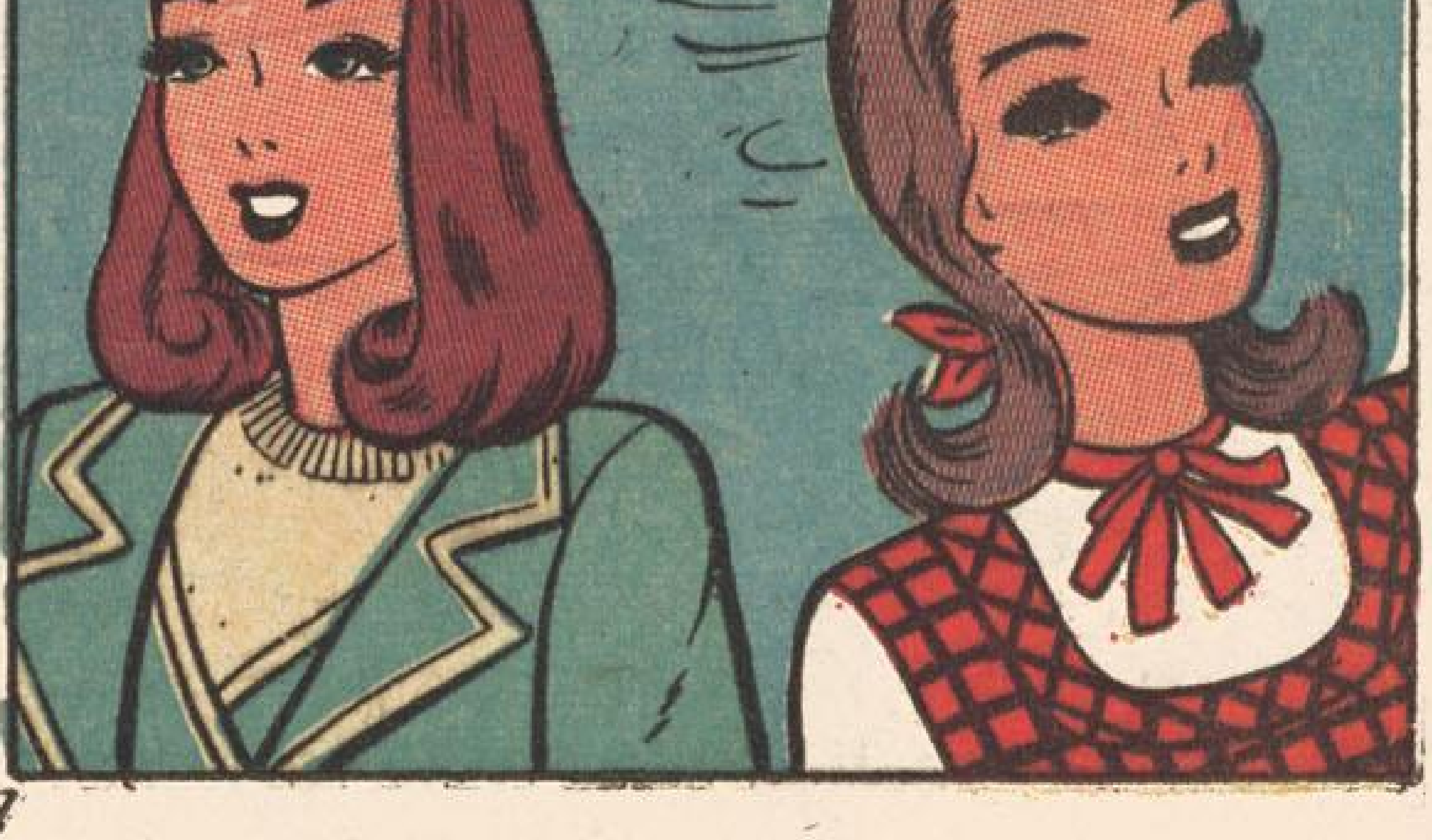
THE END

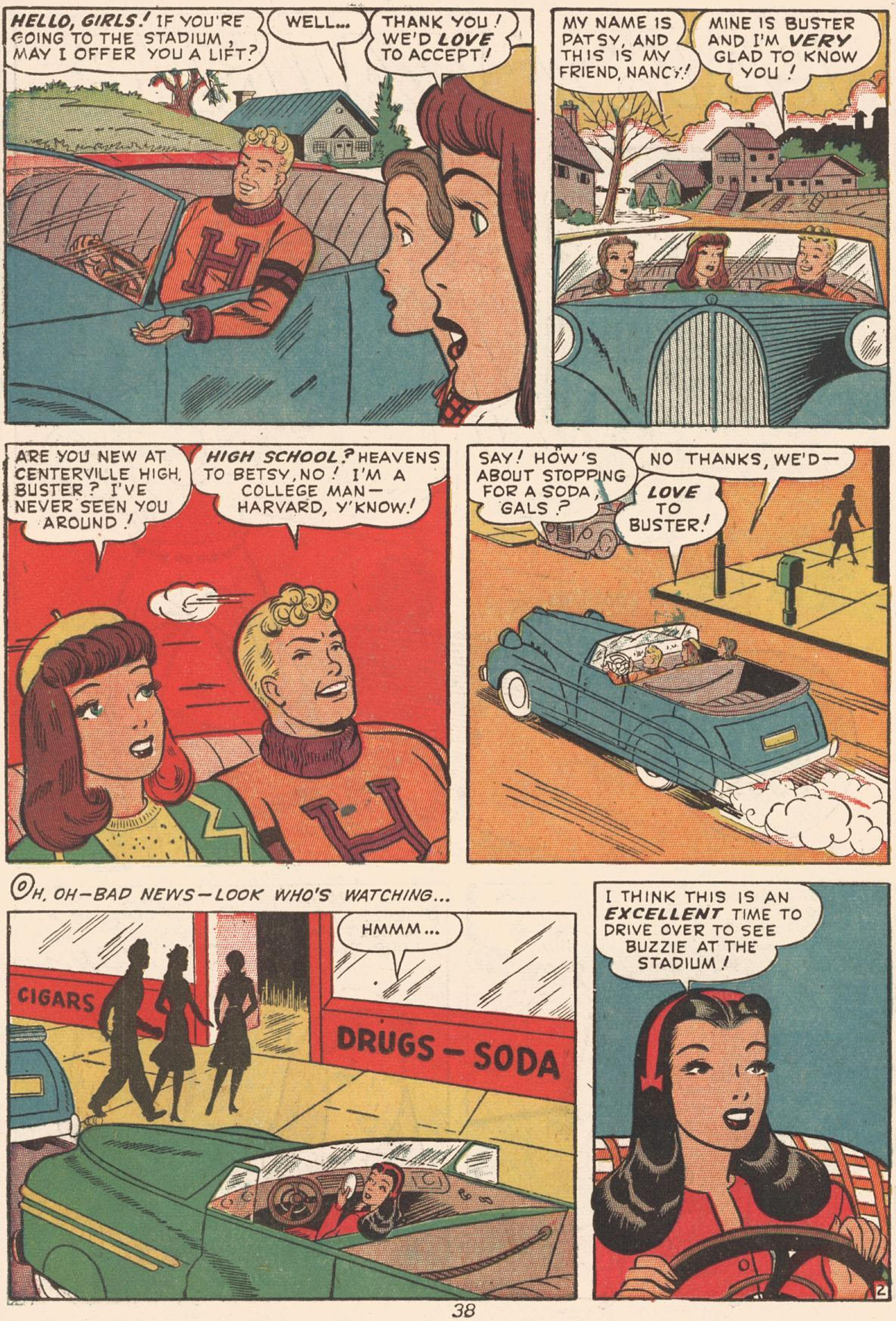
PATSY WALKER

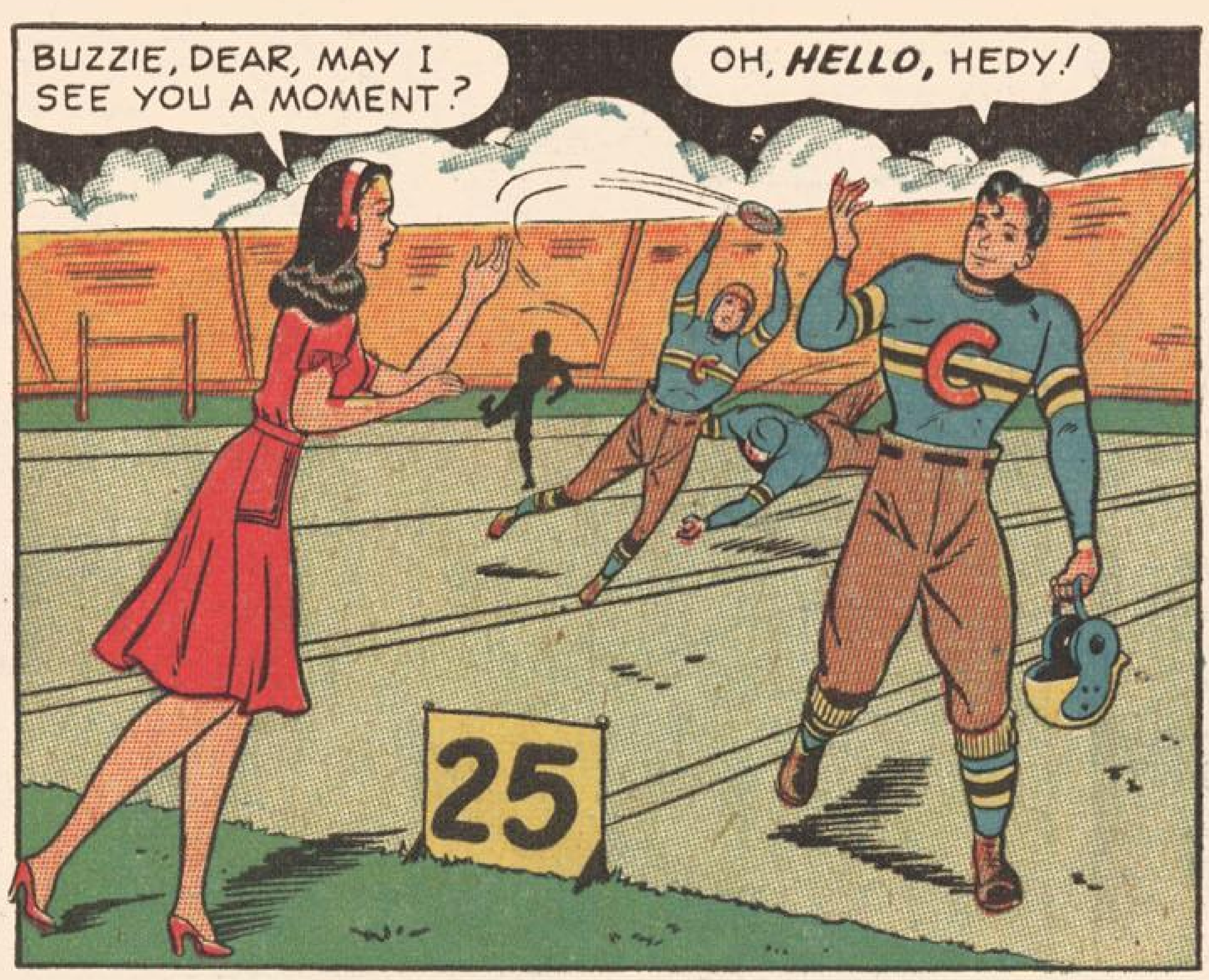
"THROWN FOR A LOSS!"

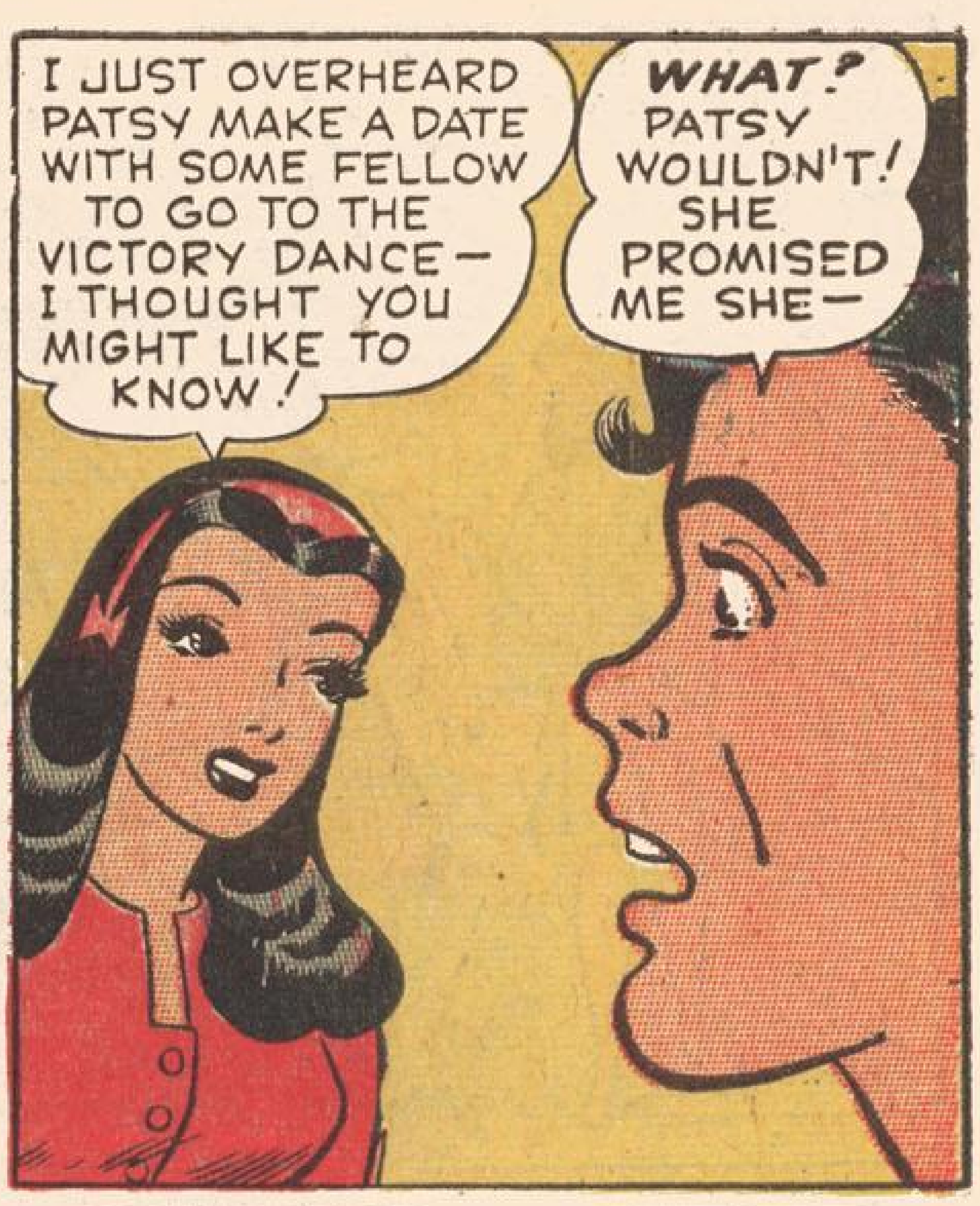

LOOK, NANCY! BUZZ IS GOING TO THROW A PASS!
YES! AND HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE!
YOO HOO, BUZZIE!
2173

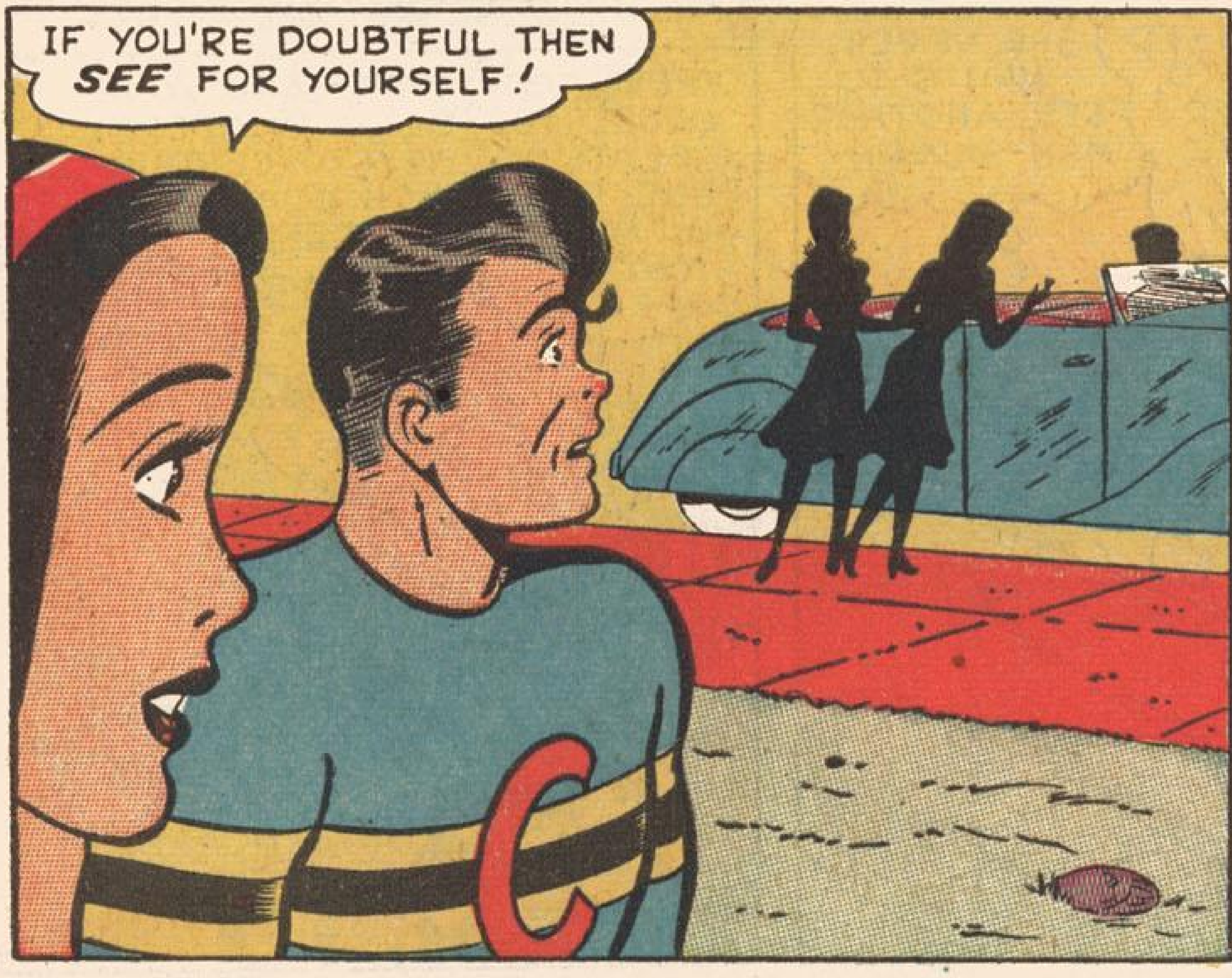

LET'S HURRY, NANCY! THE BOYS ARE EXPECTING US AT FOOTBALL PRACTICE!
I HOPE SPIKE ASKS ME TO GO TO THE VICTORY DANCE WITH HIM!

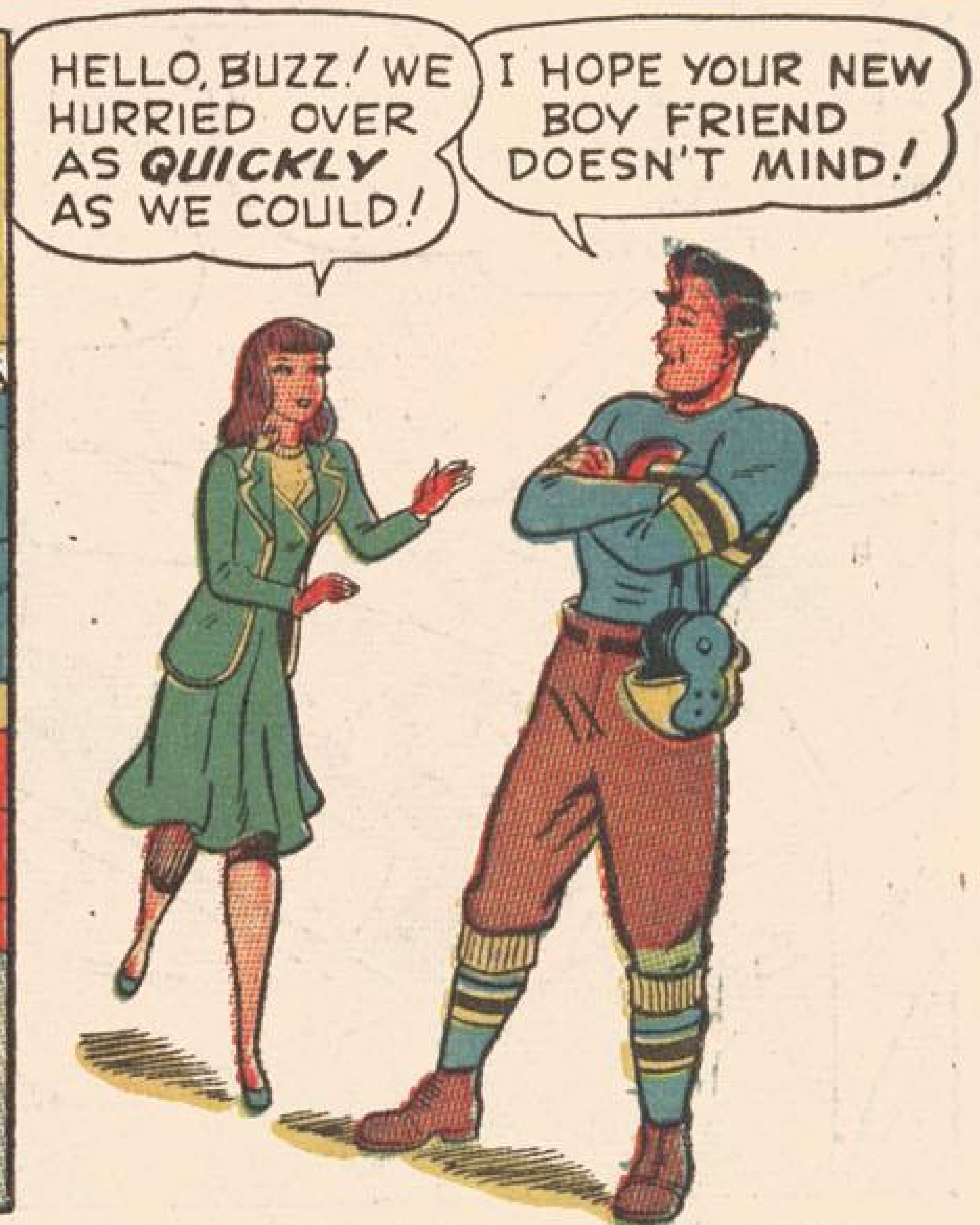

I'M SO PROUD OF BUZZ! HE'S THE BEST MAN ON OUR TEAM!
?
HONK! HONK!

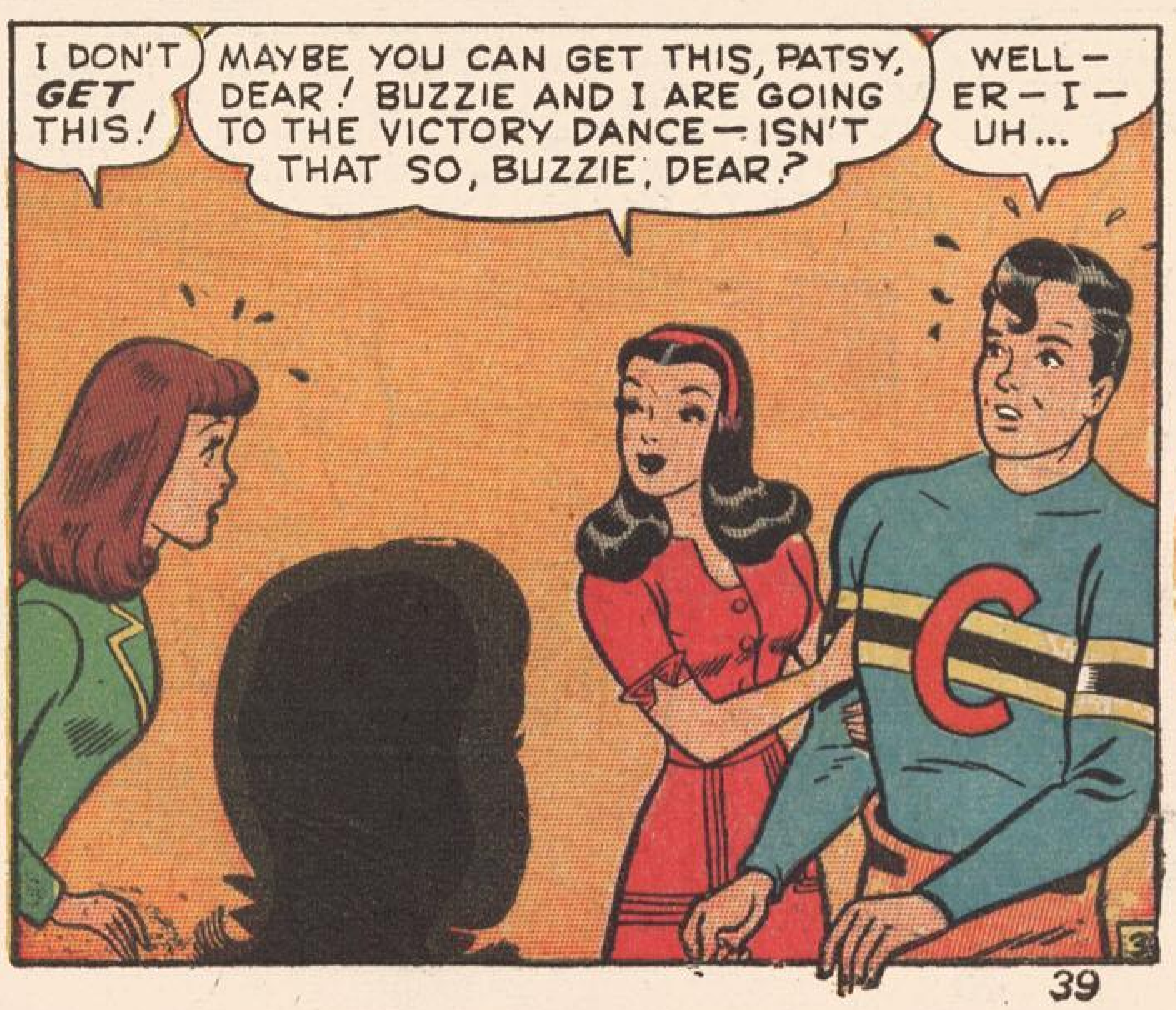

HELLO, GIRLS! IF YOU'RE GOING TO THE STADIUM, MAY I OFFER YOU A LIFT?
WELL...
THANK YOU! WE'D LOVE TO ACCEPT!
MY NAME IS PATSY, AND THIS IS MY FRIEND, NANCY!
MINE IS BUSTER AND I'M VERY GLAD TO KNOW YOU!
ARE YOU NEW AT CENTERVILLE HIGH, BUSTER? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU AROUND!
HIGH SCHOOL? HEAVENS TO BETSY, NO! I'M A COLLEGE MAN— HARVARD, Y'KNOW!
SAY! HOW'S ABOUT STOPPING FOR A SODA, GALS?
NO THANKS, WE'D—
LOVE TO BUSTER!
OH, OH—BAD NEWS—LOOK WHO'S WATCHING...
HMMM...
CIGARS
DRUGS – SODA
I THINK THIS IS AN EXCELLENT TIME TO DRIVE OVER TO SEE BUZZIE AT THE STADIUM!
2

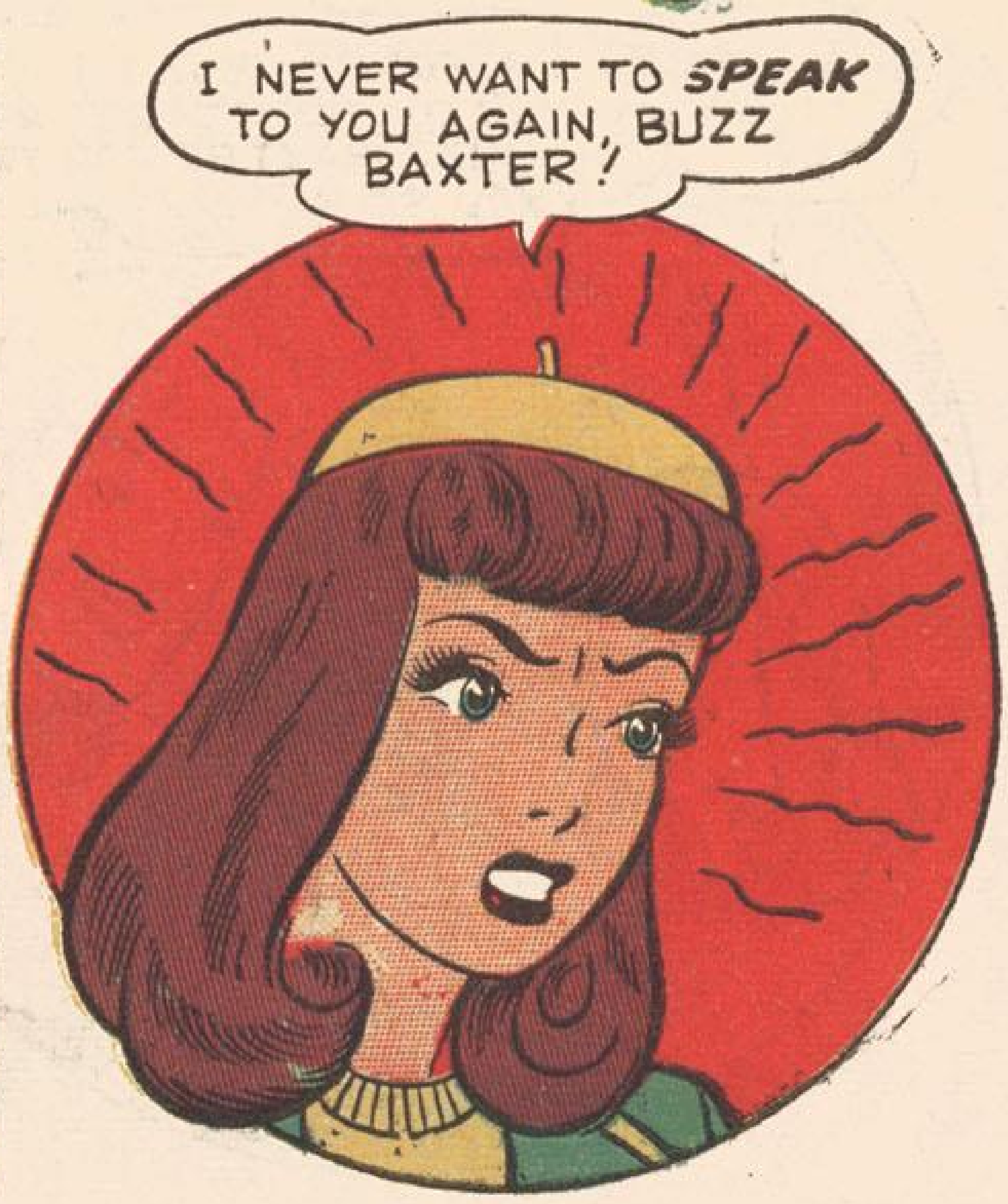

BUZZIE, DEAR, MAY I SEE YOU A MOMENT?
OH, **HELLO,** HEDY!
25

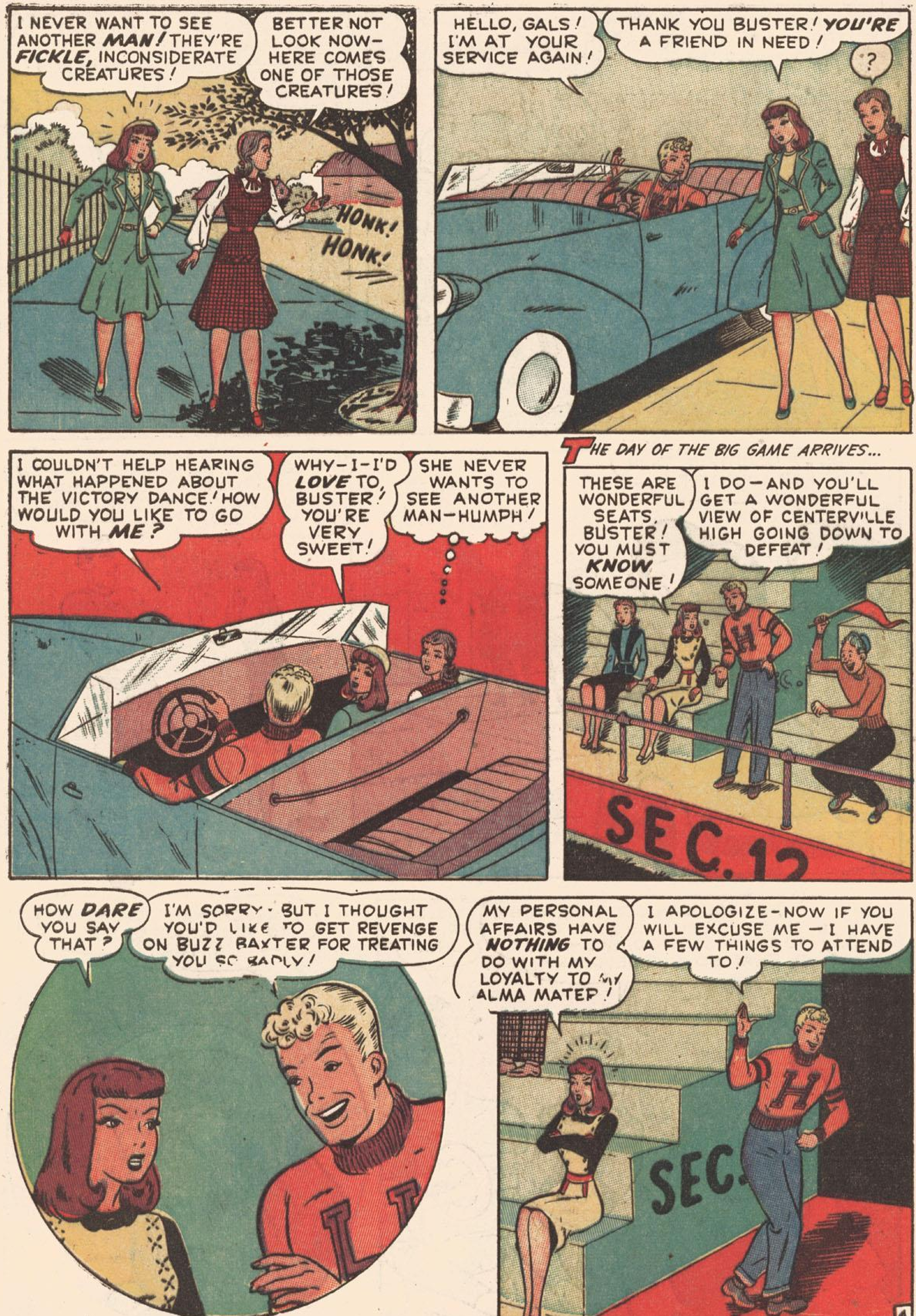

I JUST OVERHEARD PATSY MAKE A DATE WITH SOME FELLOW TO GO TO THE VICTORY DANCE— I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW!
WHAT? PATSY WOULDN'T! SHE PROMISED ME SHE—

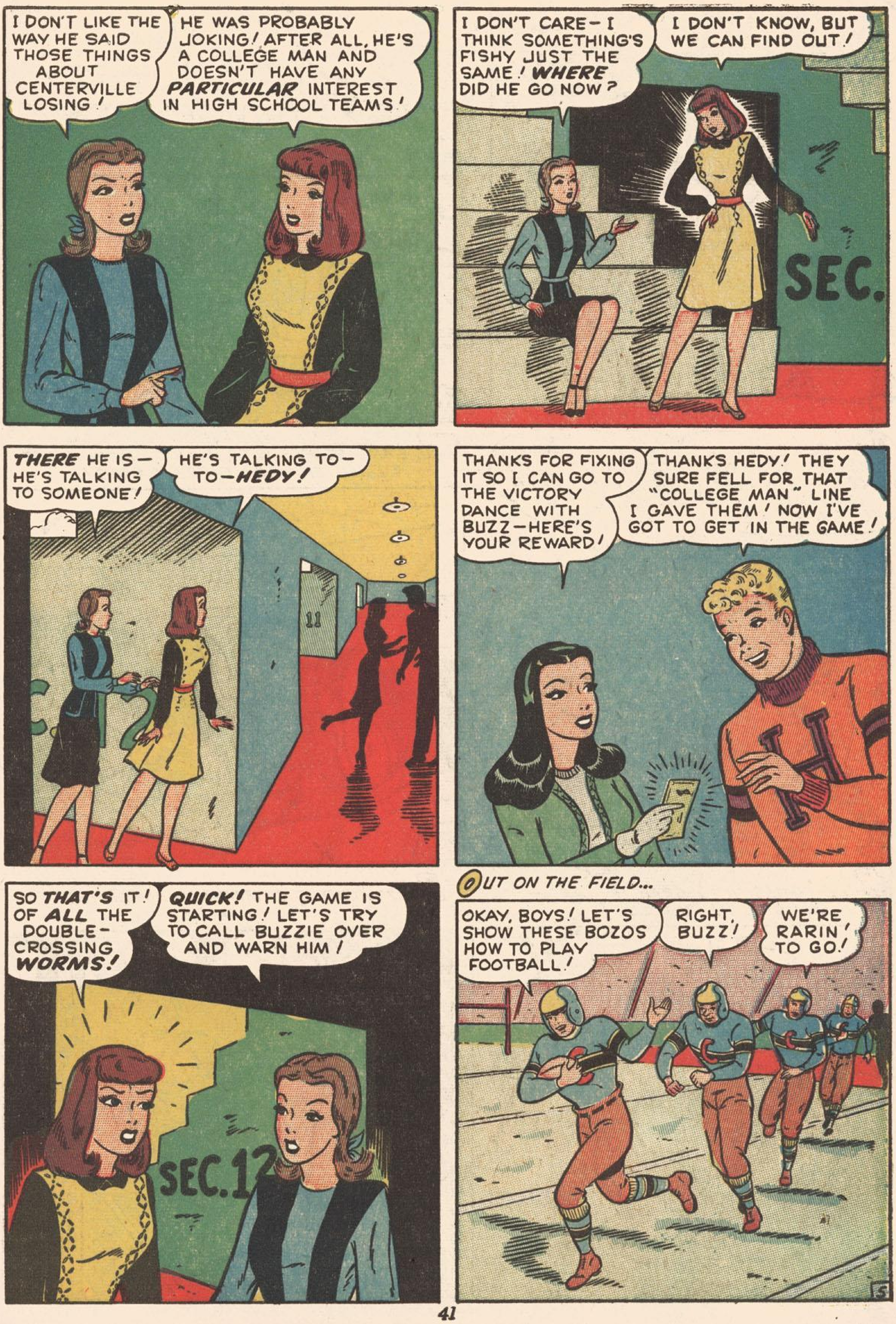

IF YOU'RE DOUBTFUL THEN **SEE** FOR YOURSELF!

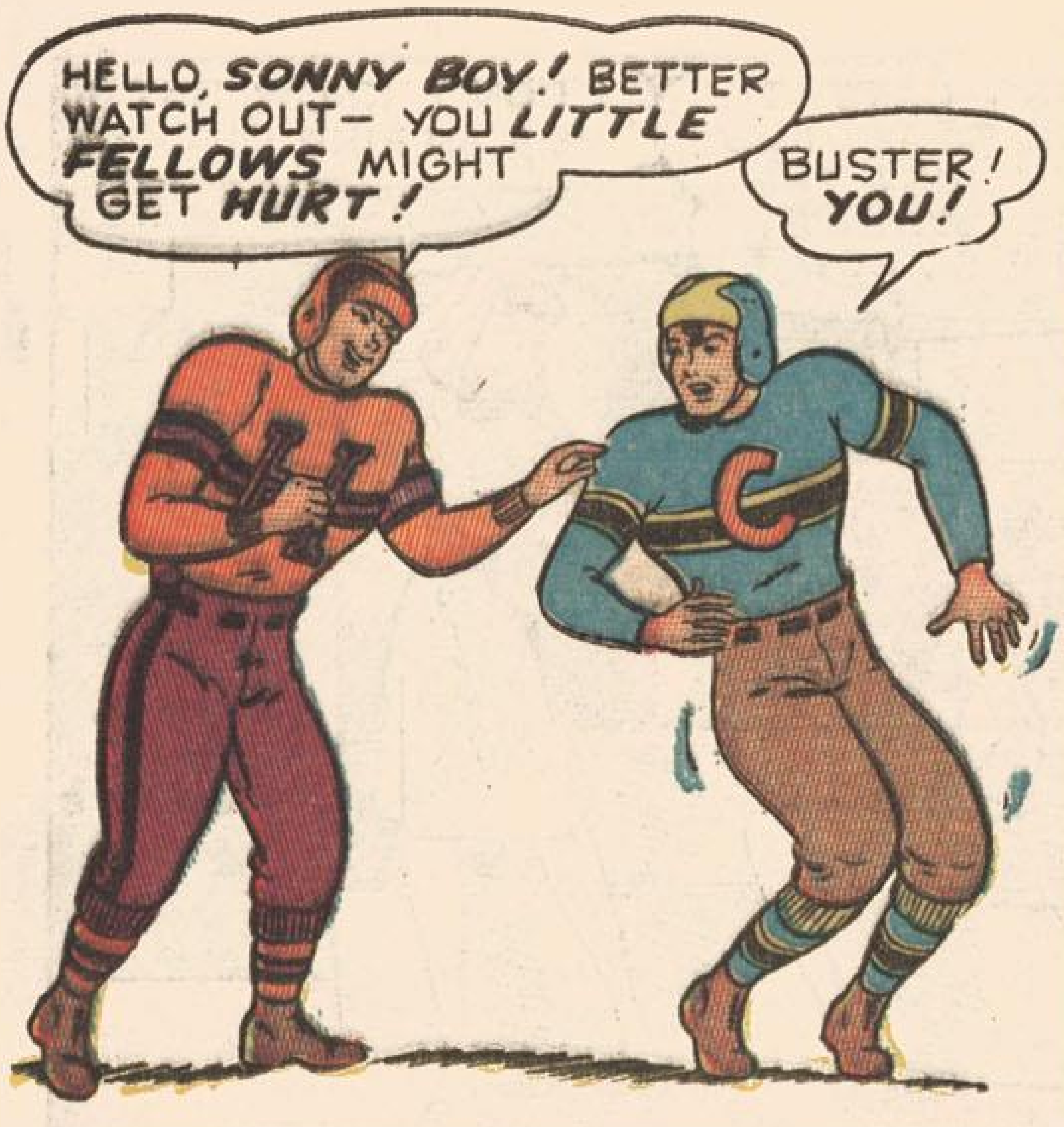

HELLO, BUZZ! WE HURRIED OVER AS **QUICKLY** AS WE COULD!
I HOPE YOUR NEW BOY FRIEND DOESN'T MIND!

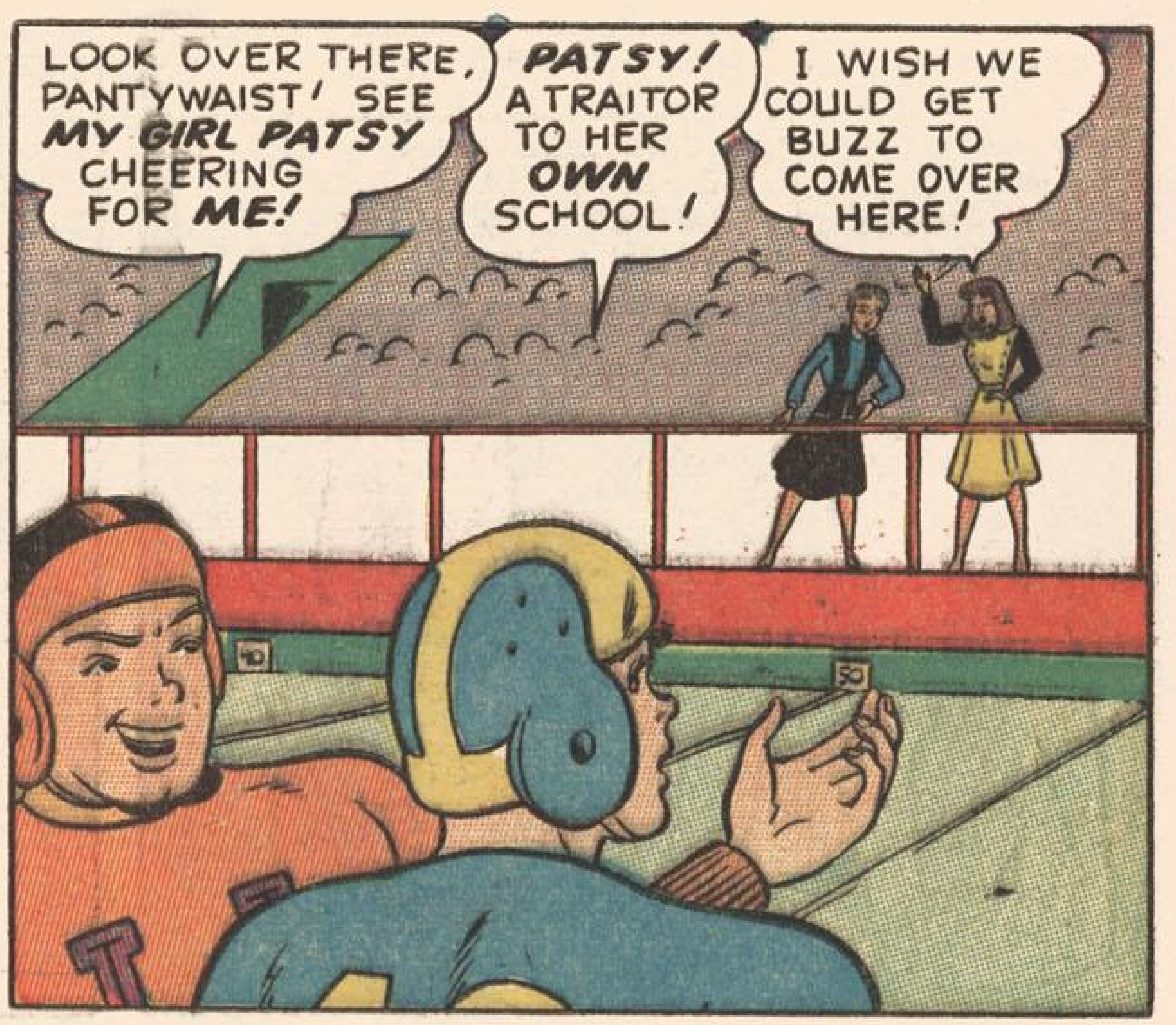

I DON'T **GET** THIS!
MAYBE YOU CAN GET THIS, PATSY, DEAR! BUZZIE AND I ARE GOING TO THE VICTORY DANCE—ISN'T THAT SO, BUZZIE, DEAR?
WELL— ER—I— UH...

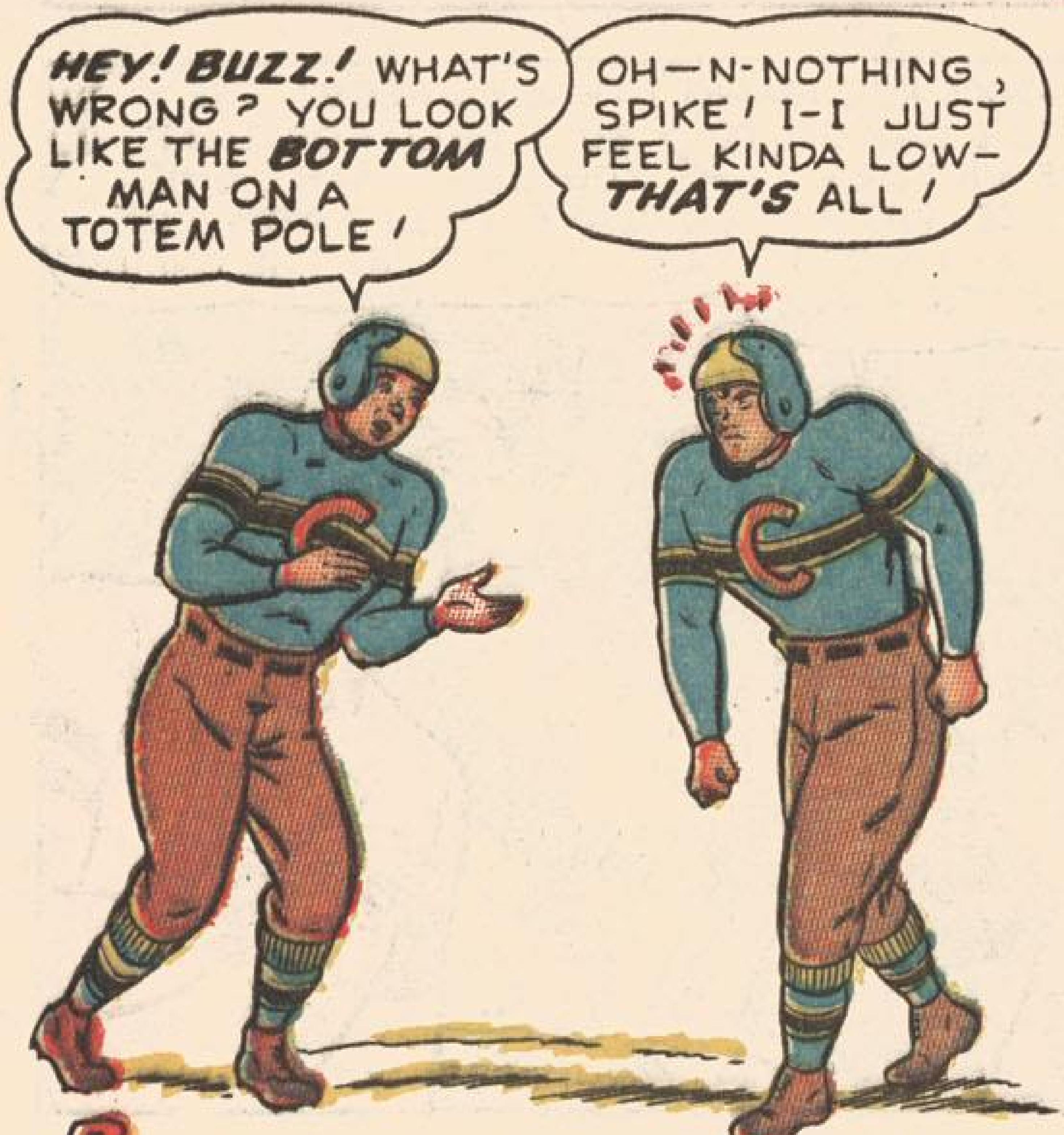

I NEVER WANT TO **SPEAK** TO YOU AGAIN, BUZZ BAXTER!


I NEVER WANT TO SEE ANOTHER **MAN!** THEY'RE **FICKLE,** INCONSIDERATE CREATURES!
BETTER NOT LOOK NOW— HERE COMES ONE OF THOSE CREATURES!
HONK! HONK!
HELLO, GALS! I'M AT YOUR SERVICE AGAIN!
THANK YOU BUSTER! ***YOU'RE*** A FRIEND IN NEED!
?
I COULDN'T HELP HEARING WHAT HAPPENED ABOUT THE VICTORY DANCE! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO WITH **ME?**
WHY—I—I'D **LOVE** TO, BUSTER! YOU'RE VERY SWEET!
SHE NEVER WANTS TO SEE ANOTHER MAN—HUMPH!
THE DAY OF THE BIG GAME ARRIVES...
THESE ARE WONDERFUL SEATS, BUSTER! YOU MUST **KNOW** SOMEONE!
I DO—AND YOU'LL GET A WONDERFUL VIEW OF CENTERVILLE HIGH GOING DOWN TO DEFEAT!
H
SEC. 12
HOW **DARE** YOU SAY THAT?
I'M SORRY - BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO GET REVENGE ON BUZZ BAXTER FOR TREATING YOU SO BADLY!
L T
MY PERSONAL AFFAIRS HAVE **NOTHING** TO DO WITH MY LOYALTY TO MY ALMA MATER!
I APOLOGIZE—NOW IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME—I HAVE A FEW THINGS TO ATTEND TO!
H
SEC.
4

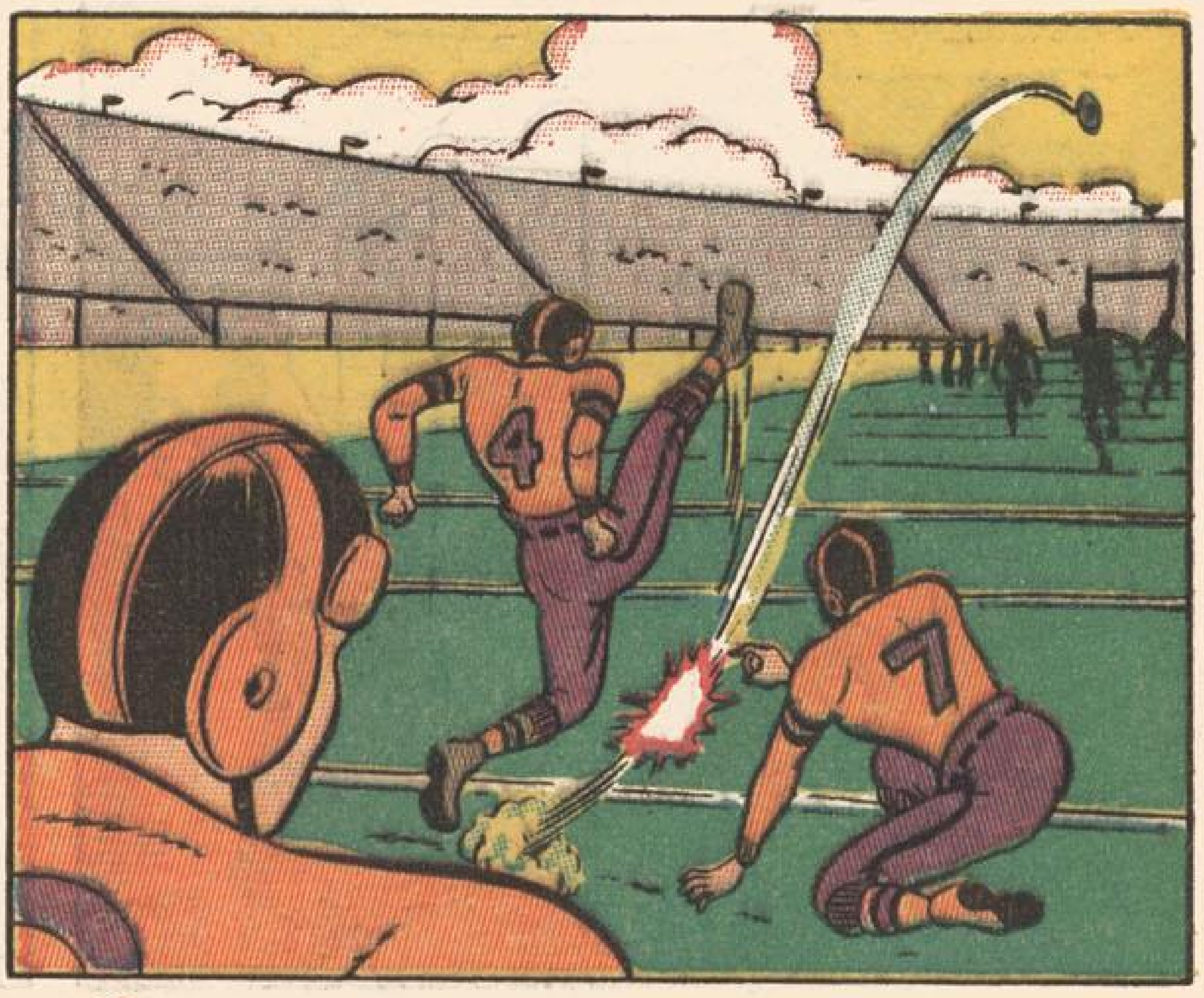

I DON'T LIKE THE WAY HE SAID THOSE THINGS ABOUT CENTERVILLE LOSING!
HE WAS PROBABLY JOKING! AFTER ALL, HE'S A COLLEGE MAN AND DOESN'T HAVE ANY PARTICULAR INTEREST IN HIGH SCHOOL TEAMS!
I DON'T CARE–I THINK SOMETHING'S FISHY JUST THE SAME! WHERE DID HE GO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT WE CAN FIND OUT!
SEC.
THERE HE IS–HE'S TALKING TO SOMEONE!
HE'S TALKING TO–TO–HEDY!
11
THANKS FOR FIXING IT SO I CAN GO TO THE VICTORY DANCE WITH BUZZ–HERE'S YOUR REWARD!
THANKS HEDY! THEY SURE FELL FOR THAT "COLLEGE MAN" LINE I GAVE THEM! NOW I'VE GOT TO GET IN THE GAME!
H
SO THAT'S IT! OF ALL THE DOUBLE-CROSSING WORMS!
QUICK! THE GAME IS STARTING! LET'S TRY TO CALL BUZZIE OVER AND WARN HIM!
SEC. 12
OUT ON THE FIELD...
OKAY, BOYS! LET'S SHOW THESE BOZOS HOW TO PLAY FOOTBALL!
RIGHT, BUZZ!
WE'RE RARIN' TO GO!
5


HELLO, SONNY BOY! BETTER WATCH OUT— YOU LITTLE FELLOWS MIGHT GET HURT!
BUSTER! YOU!

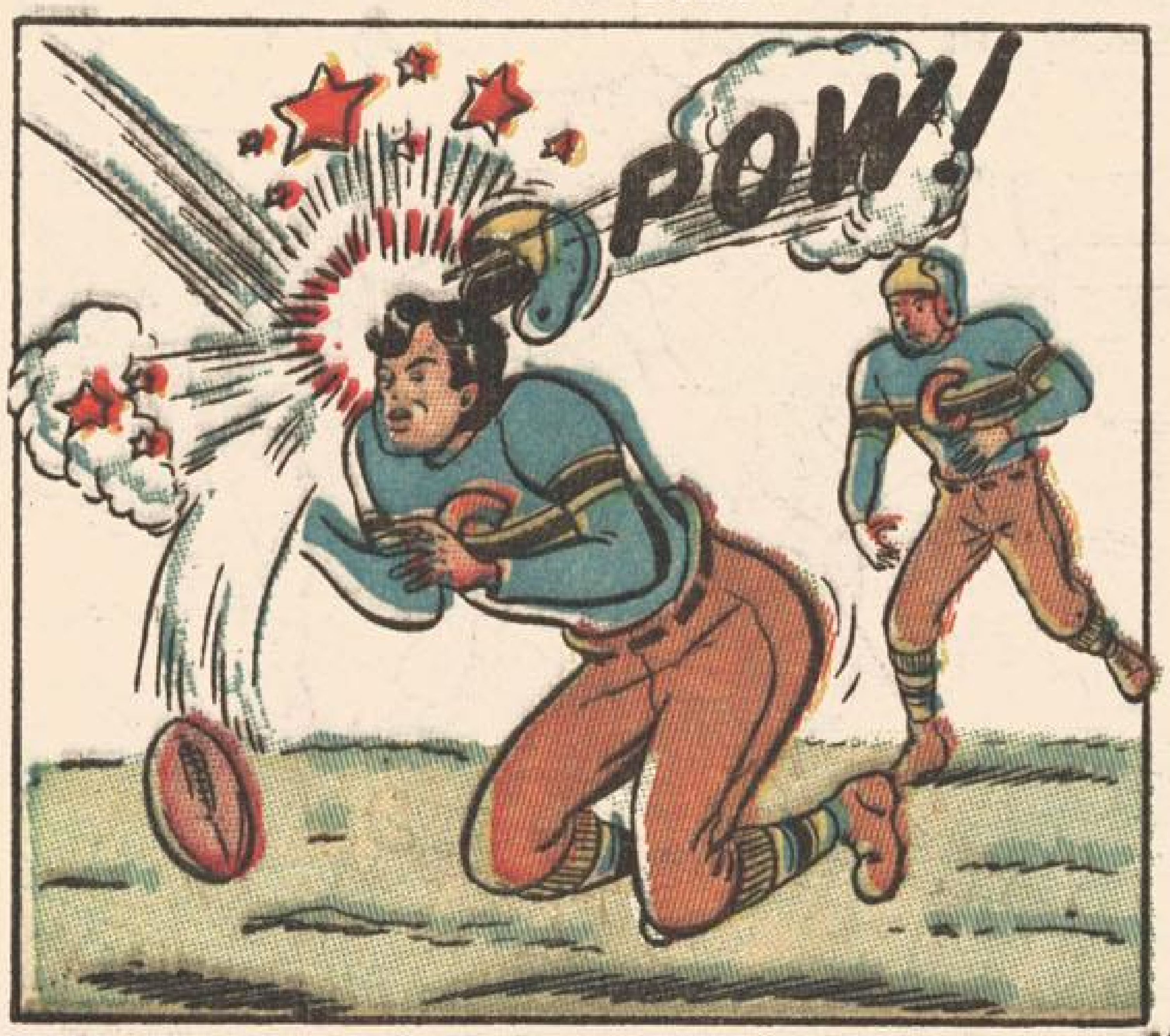

LOOK OVER THERE, PANTYWAIST! SEE MY GIRL PATSY CHEERING FOR ME!
PATSY! A TRAITOR TO HER OWN SCHOOL!
I WISH WE COULD GET BUZZ TO COME OVER HERE!


HEY! BUZZ! WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK LIKE THE BOTTOM MAN ON A TOTEM POLE!
OH—N-NOTHING, SPIKE! I-I JUST FEEL KINDA LOW— THAT'S ALL!

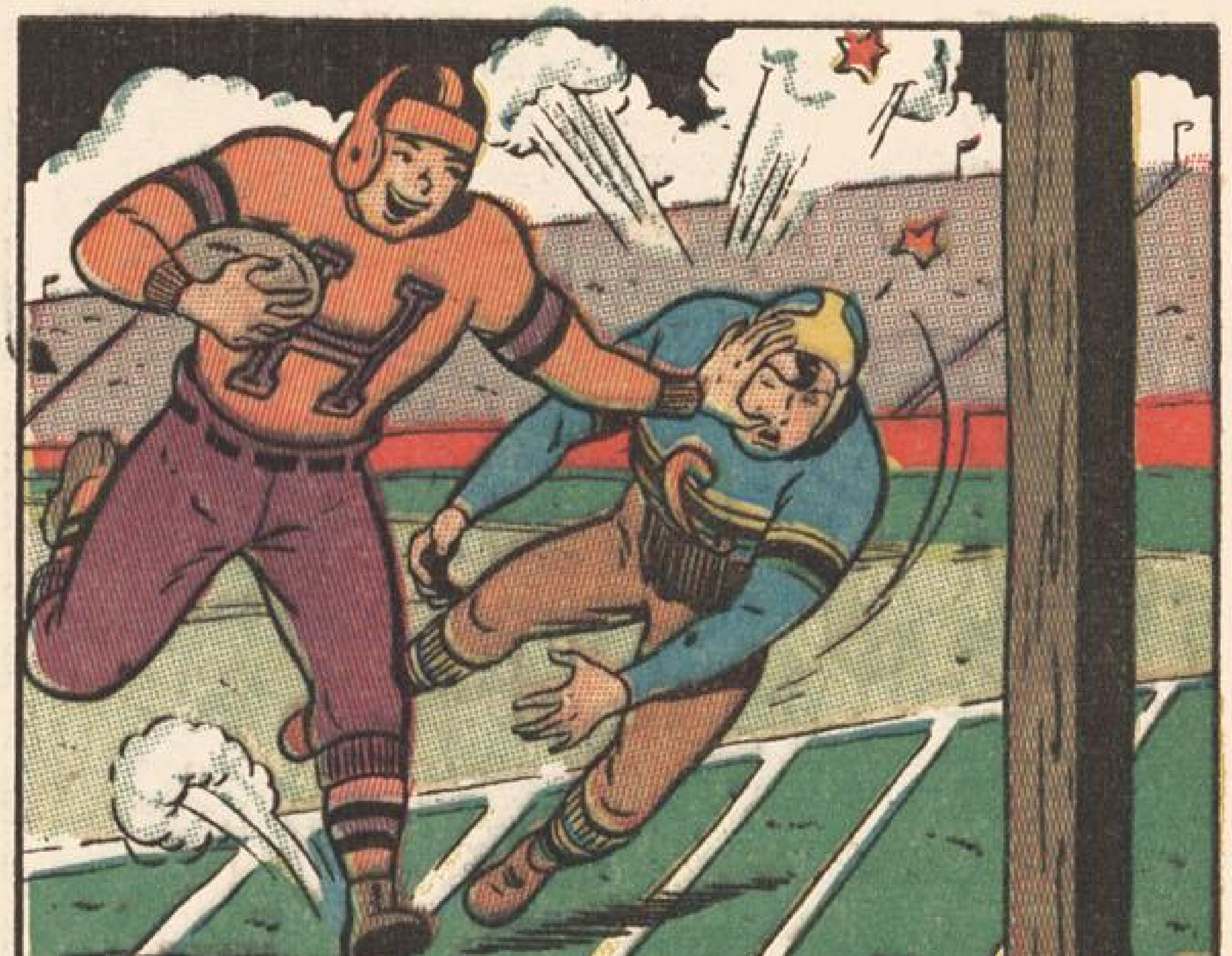
THE GAME STARTS WITH HILLSIDE KICKING OFF TO CENTERVILLE! THERE IT GOES!

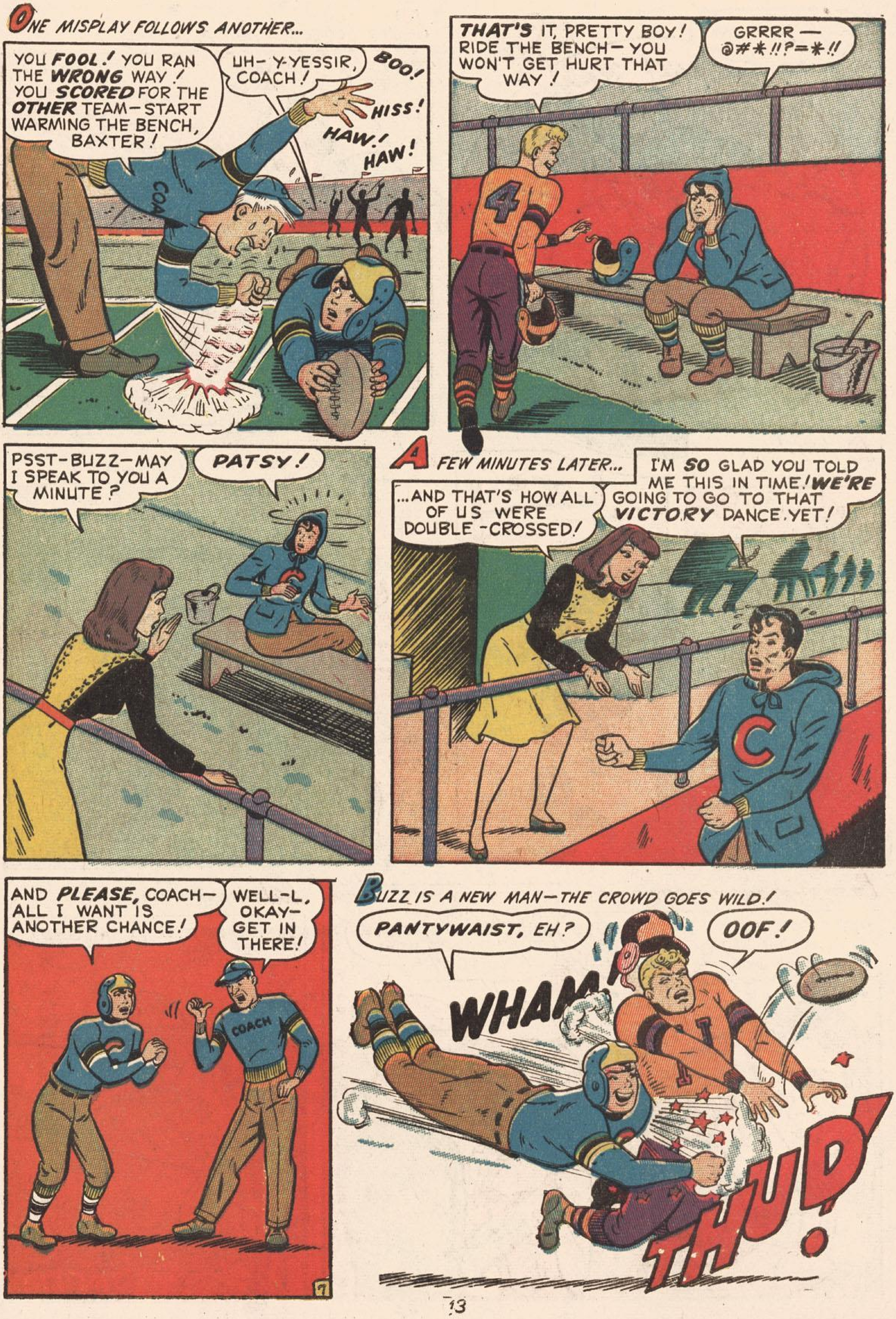


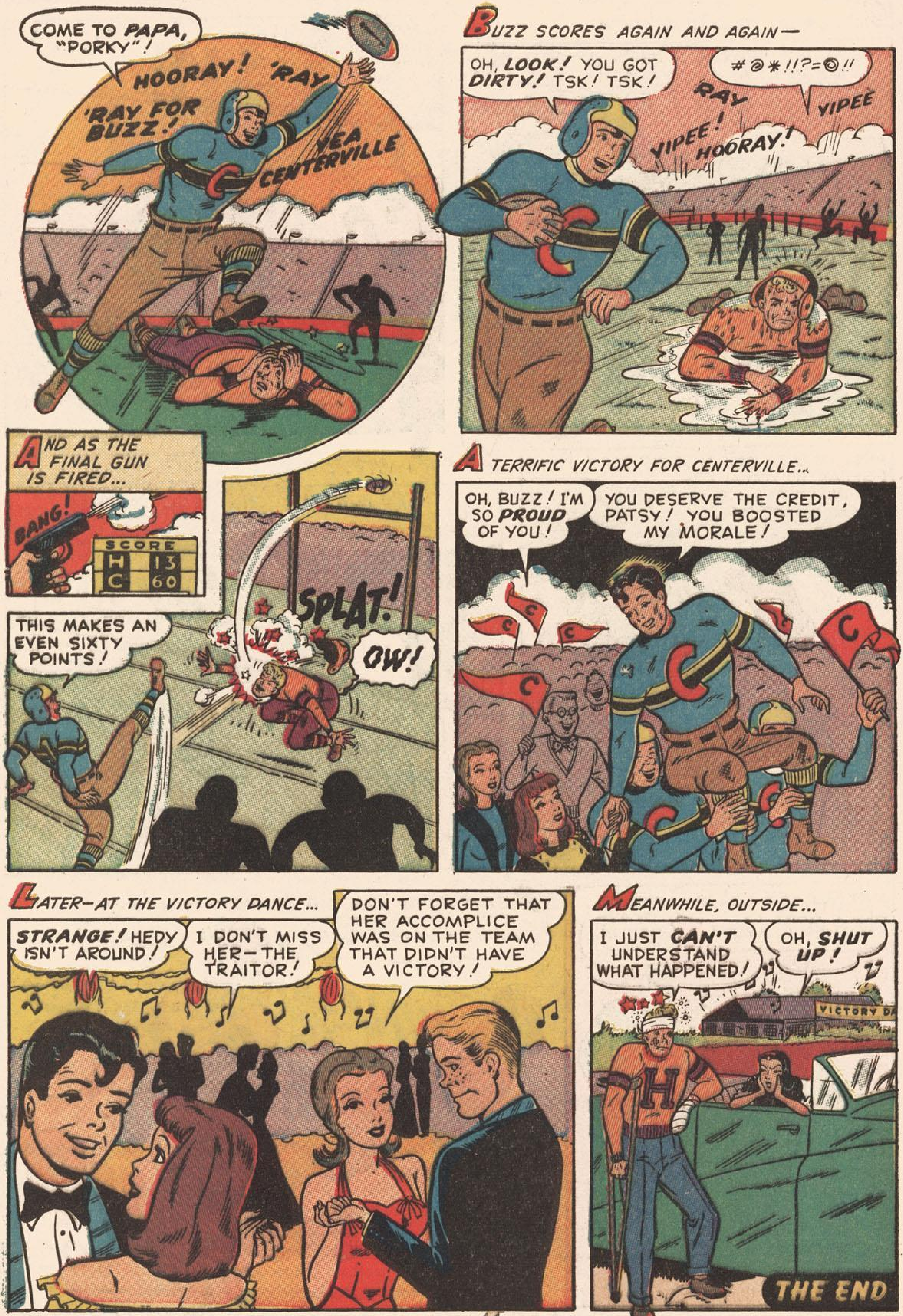
BUZZ COMES IN TO GRAB IT— AND— OH! OH! HE FUMBLES!



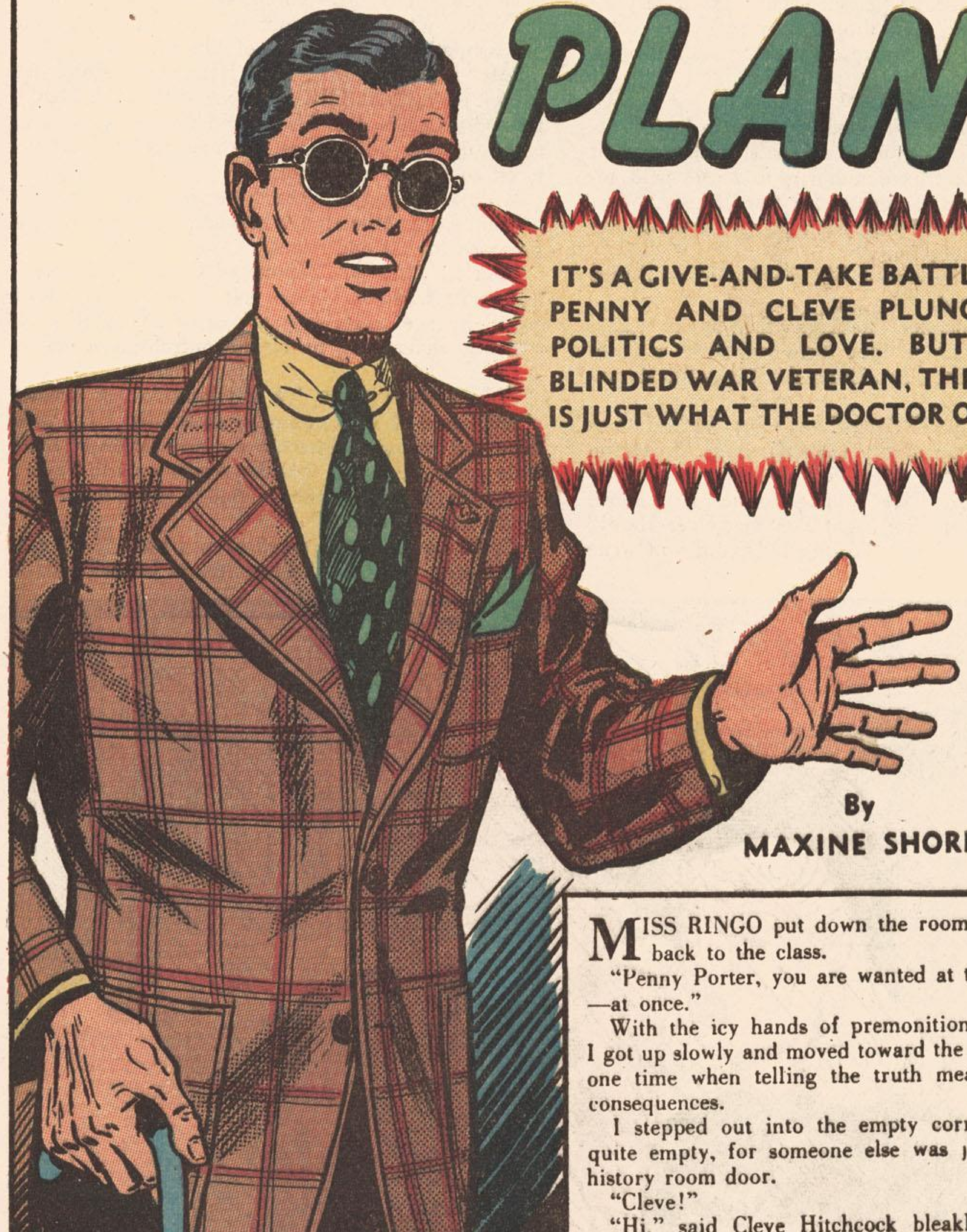
*BUZZ' MIND IS **CERTAINLY** NOT ON THE GAME!*




ONE MISPLAY FOLLOWS ANOTHER...
YOU FOOL! YOU RAN THE WRONG WAY! YOU SCORED FOR THE OTHER TEAM—START WARMING THE BENCH, BAXTER!
UH- Y-YESSIR, COACH!
BOO!
HISS!
HAW! HAW!
COACH
THAT'S IT, PRETTY BOY! RIDE THE BENCH—YOU WON'T GET HURT THAT WAY!
GRRRR— @#✱!!?=✱!!
4
C
PSST-BUZZ—MAY I SPEAK TO YOU A MINUTE?
PATSY!
C
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
...AND THAT'S HOW ALL OF US WERE DOUBLE-CROSSED!
I'M SO GLAD YOU TOLD ME THIS IN TIME! WE'RE GOING TO GO TO THAT VICTORY DANCE YET!
C
AND PLEASE, COACH—ALL I WANT IS ANOTHER CHANCE!
WELL-L, OKAY—GET IN THERE!
COACH
7
BUZZ IS A NEW MAN—THE CROWD GOES WILD!
PANTYWAIST, EH?
OOF!
WHAM!
THUD!


COME TO PAPA, "PORKY"!
HOORAY! 'RAY
'RAY FOR BUZZ!
YEA CENTERVILLE
BUZZ SCORES AGAIN AND AGAIN—
OH, LOOK! YOU GOT DIRTY! TSK! TSK!
#@*!!?=@!!
RAY
YIPEE!
HOORAY!
YIPEE
AND AS THE FINAL GUN IS FIRED...
BANG!
SCORE
H 13
C 60
THIS MAKES AN EVEN SIXTY POINTS!
SPLAT!
OW!
A TERRIFIC VICTORY FOR CENTERVILLE...
OH, BUZZ! I'M SO PROUD OF YOU!
YOU DESERVE THE CREDIT, PATSY! YOU BOOSTED MY MORALE!
LATER—AT THE VICTORY DANCE...
STRANGE! HEDY ISN'T AROUND!
I DON'T MISS HER—THE TRAITOR!
DON'T FORGET THAT HER ACCOMPLICE WAS ON THE TEAM THAT DIDN'T HAVE A VICTORY!
MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE...
I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED!
OH, SHUT UP!
VICTORY DA
THE END

THE BEST LAID PLANS



IT'S A GIVE-AND-TAKE BATTLE WHEN PENNY AND CLEVE PLUNGE INTO POLITICS AND LOVE. BUT FOR A BLINDED WAR VETERAN, THE BATTLE IS JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED.

By
MAXINE SHORE

MISS RINGO put down the room phone, turned back to the class.

"Penny Porter, you are wanted at the Main Office—at once."

With the icy hands of premonition at my throat, I got up slowly and moved toward the door. This was one time when telling the truth meant paying the consequences.

I stepped out into the empty corridors—no, not quite empty, for someone else was just closing the history room door.

"Cleve!"

"Hi," said Cleve Hitchcock bleakly "Going my way, dream gal?"

"I . . . I'm afraid so."

Outside the Main Office we swallowed, clasped hands, and stumbled in.

Miss Hodge, the principal, looked even leaner and stiffer than usual. Also present was Mr. Potter, our weekly staff advisor, who looked wan after his 10 days' bout with the flu. This was his first day back.

The third member of the reception committee was —the head of our school board, and candidate for Mayor of Lakeville, Cyrus W. Long, in person!

"Ulp!" said Cleve.

Cyrus Long gave us the old dagger-eye, h'rumphed imperatively. Miss Hodge cleared her throat, then inquired if we knew why we had been sent for.

Mutely, we let her explain.

There was a heavy pause. Then I asked respectfully, "You mean, as editor of our school paper, I don't have the right to express honest editorial opinion?"

Miss Hodge hesitated.

Cleve took the cue, knotted his brow in boyish bewilderment. "You mean, as advertising manager of the *Breeze*, I don't have authority to accept paid advertisements from candidates for town offices? Why, we've always carried such ads . . . some for . . . for Mr. Long himself, here."

Cyrus Long ballooned his cheeks. Miss Hodge cleared her throat.

Mr. Potter coughed hackingly, then spoke wanly. "Naturally, I had no idea there would be any objection to carrying news items about a political candidate . . ."

"News items, yes!" Cyrus Long's fist smashed down on the open copy of the *Lakeville High Breeze* on Miss Hodge's desk. "Not full columns, page after page, with pictures! Read this editorial." He stabbed at the head. "Let Him Fight For You Over Here!" His eyes pinioned me. "Young lady, did you write that?"

"Y-yes, sir . . ."

He swung fiercely on Cleve. "Look at this full-page ad. You're responsible, young man?"

"Yes, sir," said Cleve manfully. "We needed advertising."

"Blast it!" roared Cyrus Long, "the whole confounded paper sounds like a biography of this young pup, Garth Webster! His parentage, school days, war record, qualifications—purely fictional, of course—for office. Why, it's obvious he's trying to play on the sympathy of the people of this town to . . ."

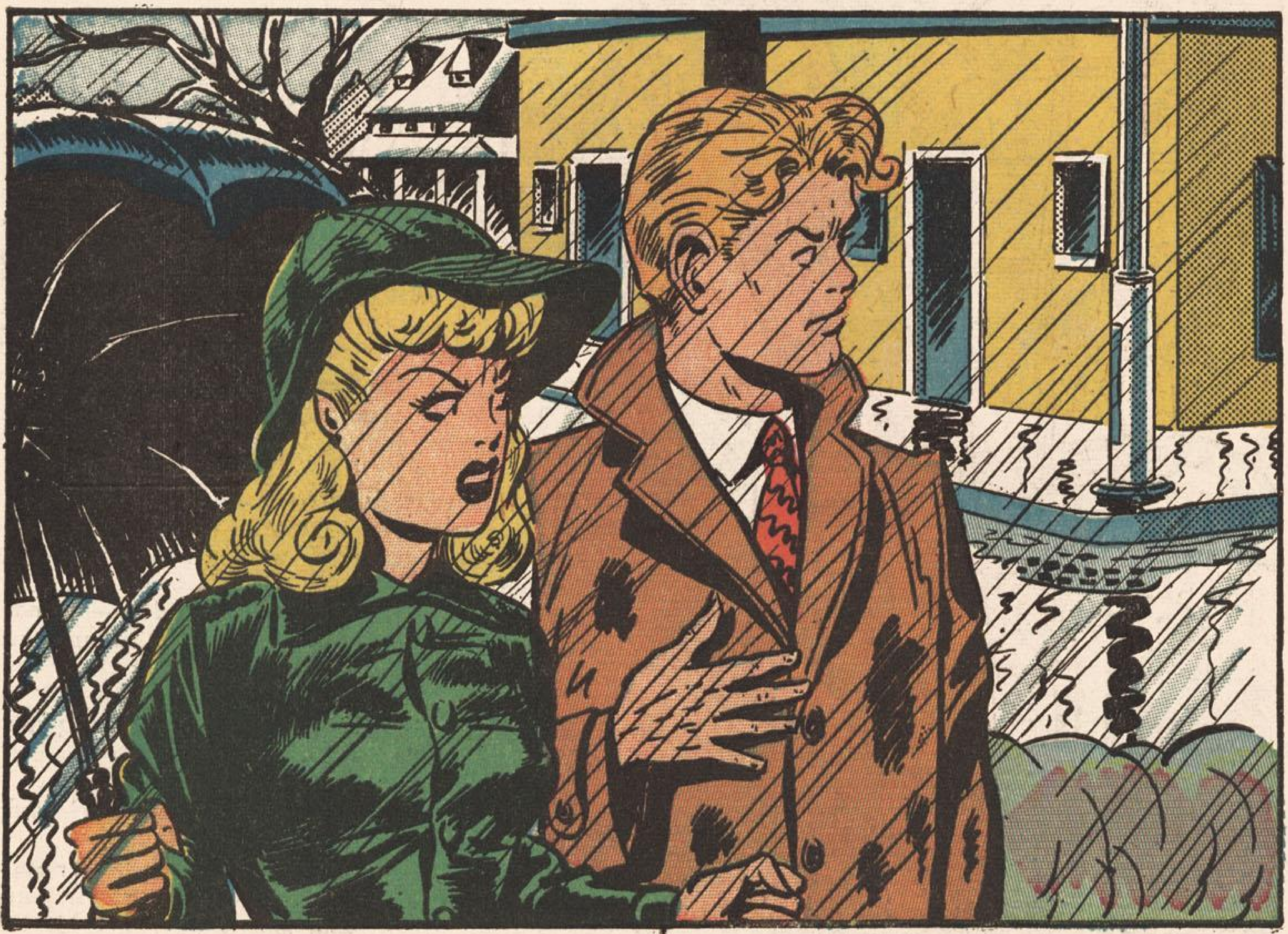
"Mr. Long, please!" Miss Hodge's nose was an earnest pink. "Naturally, when one of Lakeville High's most distinguished and . . . and beloved graduates enters the mayoralty race, the news is of great interest to the entire school."

We all gaped. I suppose those were the first independent words Miss Hodge had uttered in Mr. Long's presence for 20 odd years.

"But . . . but . . ." sputtered Cyrus Long, "anybody with half a brain can tell young Webster isn't suited by age, experience or native ability to cope with the challenging problems confronting a mayor . . ."

"Oh, I don't think it's anything to get excited about," said Mr. Potter rather cheerfully. "The kids were just trying to increase the circulation of their little paper by giving it wider reader appeal. Trying to save the sheet from the oblivion to which the school board has doomed it."

Cyrus Long's head jerked toward him. "Let's see, Mr. Potter, you haven't been here at Lakeville High



"THAT DOES IT," I SAID. "CLEVE, WE'VE GOT TO STOP THAT long, have you?"

"Long enough to lose 15 pounds trying to live on the salary." Mr. Potter suddenly looked much stronger—he even grinned. "No, Mr. Long, you can't fire me. I've already quit—leave next semester for a better job."

Cyrus Long snorted. His eyes pawed the room. Then he charged again. "No man," he said pompously, "is more tolerant than I with the whimsies of the young, but I have the welfare of Lakeville at heart. I cannot condone . . . er . . . subversive activities by . . . er . . . potential juvenile delinquents who may do lasting harm to our fair community."

"But, Mr. Long . . ." I protested indignantly.

He waved my voice away. "This dangerous adolescent impudence must cease. The *Breeze* must cease publication as of this issue. Moreover, Miss Hodge," he went on ruthlessly, "I must ask you to expel from school the perpetrators of this tom-foolery."

Out in the hall, Cleve and I looked at each other.

"I don't think," said Cleve, "that my folks are going to like this."

"Cleve," I said radiantly, "our being expelled is just about the best thing that could have happened."

Cleve goggled. "I love your unspoiled viewpoint."

"Don't you see? We can picket!"

If I do say it myself, and Cleve says I never fail to—those sandwich boards showed the touch of genius. On one side of Cleve's boards was the legend, CYRUS LONG MENACES SCHOOLS. The other side read, VOTE FOR GARTH WEBSTER. I carried boards reading, LET HIM FIGHT FOR YOU OVER HERE and GARTH WEBSTER FOR MAYOR.

Probably I'd better explain our persistence. It all started the day, weeks before, when Mr. Potter had announced to the assembled staff of the *Breeze* that our paper would have to be discontinued unless circulation and advertising doubled within the next few weeks. The school board had refused to allot any more funds to cover rising printing costs. It was ghastly—just when, after three long years, I'd finally gotten to be editor, too!

"Sorry, kids," Mr. Potter had said, "you've all done a good job. I doubt if there's a better little school paper in the state—but that's the ultimatum from headquarters." He shrugged. "This is a small school. There just aren't enough students to support a paper without financial assistance."

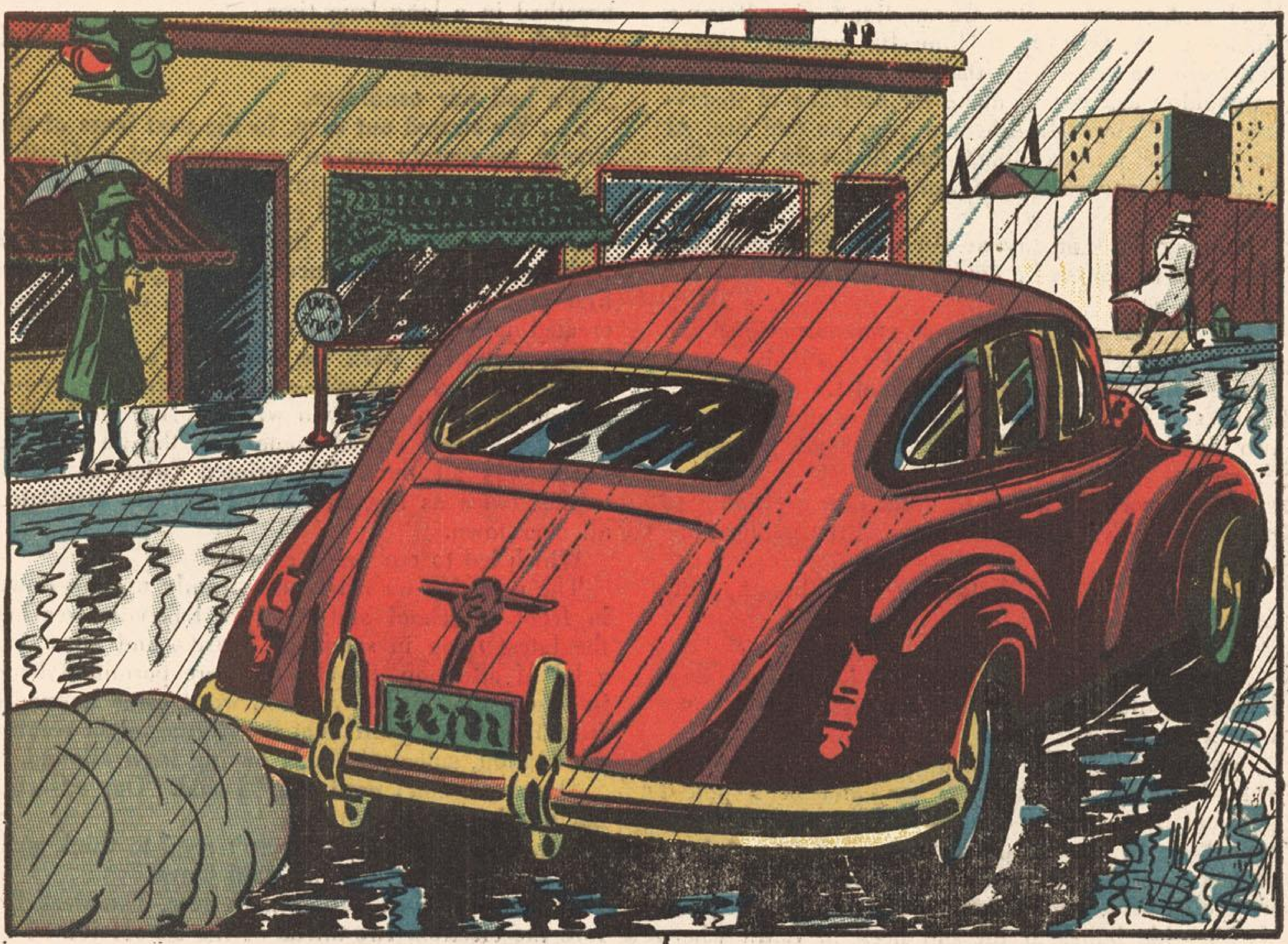
Cleve and I walked blindly out into the rainy dusk. Life, at that low moment, looked like the inside of a leaky barrel.

Glumly we started across the wet street. A long black car jumped the light, roared past, spraying us with mud. I didn't have to look twice to recognize old Cyrus Long's limousine. Inside me, something snapped.

"That does it!" I said. "Cleve, we've got to stop that old scrooge from becoming Mayor of Lakeville."

Cleve pursed his lips. "That's a big order, even for an enterprising gal like you." But an undercurrent of interest had crept into his voice. Whether or not he admits it, Cleve really believes in me.

I gave the situation the mental once-over. Cyrus Long, the local political maestro. He had his fat



OLD SCROOGE FROM BECOMING MAYOR OF LAKEVILLE."

finger in practically every local pie—with plenty of top crust to prevent people from seeing what kind it was until too late. He was an opponent to reckon with.

"The . . . the thing to do," I began, as Cleve waited, "is . . . is back another candidate. Someone who can't be bought or flattered. Someone well known and generally popular like . . . like . . . why, Cleve, like your cousin, Garth Webster!" It was a flash of sheer inspiration.

Cleve slipped on the curb, fell to his knees, flapping like a wounded seal. Staggering up, he fastened two hands on my shoulders—hard.

"Penny . . . you . . . you . . . Penny! Maybe you've got something there! Garth is honest, well liked, knows how to organize. "But . . ." his face fell, "his eyes, Penny."

"Heck," I said tremulously, "he could hire assistants, couldn't he? And, besides, everyone knows what a help the right wife can be to a man in public office. Oh, Cleve," I almost sobbed, "don't you see what it would mean, not only for Lakeville, but for them. For Garth and Betty. He'd have something to offer her. He'd feel like somebody again."

You see, my sister Betty and Garth Webster had been engaged before he'd enlisted, but he'd come home from the war blind. I'll never forget when Betty got the letter from the hospital. Her wet-lashed blue eyes grew wide and painfully bright.

"Poor Garth," she whispered. "But I'll make it up to him—I'll make it up."

Garth had returned to Lakeville about six months ago. The whole town had turned out, complete with band and speeches. But Garth didn't give Betty a chance to make it up to him. He wouldn't marry her. Sure, he loved her—that, he reasoned, was why he couldn't ask her to make the sacrifice of marrying a blind man. His life was over, he told her. At 26, he was washed up. Done. A lovely girl like Betty could choose from a world full of able-bodied guys.

Nothing Betty or anyone else said would convince him, and of course he couldn't see the look in her eyes.

But if we could somehow convince Garth he wasn't through, that maybe, after all, he could amount to somebody—wouldn't that fix everything? Cleve and I sloshed along, dreaming aloud. It was two blocks before we fell out of the clouds, thumpety thump.

"Idea's swell," Cleve said, "but how we going to put it over? Cyrus Long controls all the publications in Lakeville."

"All except . . ." I took a deep breath, "the *Lakeville High Breeze.*"

"Penny! You mean . . .?"

"Cleve, why not? The paper is due to fold, anyhow. Why not devote the remaining issues to some worthy purpose?"

Which we did. We teen-agers may not be able to vote, but that doesn't mean we can't be a potent political factor when aroused. We canvassed the school. Garth was a natural for a candidate. A hero to Lakeville High students. There was hardly a boy in school who hadn't fought for the privilege of parking his bones at the old desk in Latin where Garth had once carved his initials.

No, we didn't have any trouble selling our candidate—except to Garth Webster.

"Me . . . mayor?" He chortled mirthlessly. "Are you nuts? I've been through all the campaigns I want for a while."

"But Garth—you've just got to!" I let him hear the tears in my voice. "You're the only one who would have a chance against old Cyrus Long."

A muscle jerked in Garth's cheek. Ever since boyhood he'd been tangling with Cyrus Long one way or another. Cleve jumped in then. He can sniff holes in the interference like an All-American.

"You can't let Lakeville down, Garth."

"I wouldn't have a chance," Garth muttered.

"You mean," said Cleve warmly, "you won't take a chance! Maybe you were a hero in war, Garth, but you're sure a coward in peace."

"Cleve!" My eyes fled, aghast, to Garth's face.

"Sorry, fella," Cleve mumbled.

"Don't be." Garth's voice was vibrant. He was grinning—actually! "It's okay," he said. Color had risen in his cheeks. He looked at least five years younger. "Seems good to have someone treat me like . . . like I was the same as everybody. Lay me out. I know everyone means well, but . . . well, I'm fed up with being treated like a sick child—so blasted gently!"

"Gosh," whispered Cleve. My throat was so clogged I couldn't speak.

Garth stood up, felt his way to the window, took a deep breath, as if it were the first real air he'd breathed in a long long time.

"Yeh, y'know—I might even enjoy a good faceful of political mud!"

We had our candidate.

. . . We started out easy. In the next issue of the *Breeze,* we merely ran an announcement of Garth's intention to run for Mayor. But we boxed it on the first page, and delivered extra copies of the paper which used to pile up in the staff cupboard, around to homes and offices. Since our paragraph was the first public announcement of Garth's candidacy, it created quite a respectable ripple.

The following week we ran Garth's picture and an interview, a long one—darned interesting, too—if I do say it myself, who wrote it. The week after that, Mr. Potter stayed home with the flu and the paper was all ours. We printed twice as many copies, twice as big, saw that the paper circulated all over town.

Which led to our being expelled.

The next day we marched solemnly up and down in front of school and all over Lakeville wearing the latest thing in sandwich boards, and attracting a lot of attention. Result—we were permitted back in school the third day. Also, word came hurriedly from the school board that the *Breeze* might resume publication, sufficient funds having been allotted.

"Poof, we don't need 'em," I said. "Our advertising has boomed!"

"And old Cyrus Long doesn't need to think we'll give up Garth's campaign," said Cleve.

We worked even harder than ever. The week before the election, two-thirds of the school joined us in a "Webster for Mayor" parade. We took pictures, sent them in with stories to the city papers. Almost immediately, reporters from one of the big dailies came down to cover the campaign. They photographed Garth, interviewed him; but also, to our disgust, Cyrus W. Long.

The climax came, you might say, when both were invited to make guest appearances on a city radio program called, "Around Our State." That was two days before the election.

Garth had given some good speeches during the campaign—he'd always been tops in dramatics at school—but he delivered the honey of them all over the microphone that night. Cyrus Long's voice drove through like a bulldozer, but Cleve's voice was wonderfully resonant and persuasive. What's more, he didn't talk like a man who felt handicapped any more.

Looking over at Betty as we listened proudly, I suddenly realized that the ring was sparkling again on her left hand. My heart felt lumpier than a little boy's pockets.

Election night we all gathered in the Webster living room, waiting. The suspense was agonizing. Cleve's hand was so tight in mine it hurt, but I hardly noticed. Garth had to win—he had to . . . had to . . .

The phone rang. "I'll get it!" shouted Cleve.

After he turned from the phone, I just sat there, thoughts whirling in my numbed brain. Garth . . . defeated!

Then Garth stood up, pulling Betty with him.

"Hey," he said slowly, "don't take it so big, folks. Heck, I never really figured on winning. Don't forget Long's machine has been building a long time. All I ever hoped to do was to scare him into giving you a better administration than he otherwise would have. I think I've succeeded. Next time . . ." he shrugged, "let's hope a better man will win. A lot of folks have waked up—including me. Lakeville's a lot healthier politically than it was."

"B-but I was looking forward to being the mayor's sister-in-law," I wailed, bursting into frustrated sobs. Maybe . . . maybe Garth wouldn't marry Betty now, after all.

Betty came to put her arms around me. "There, there, honey. We'll never forget what you've done for us—never."

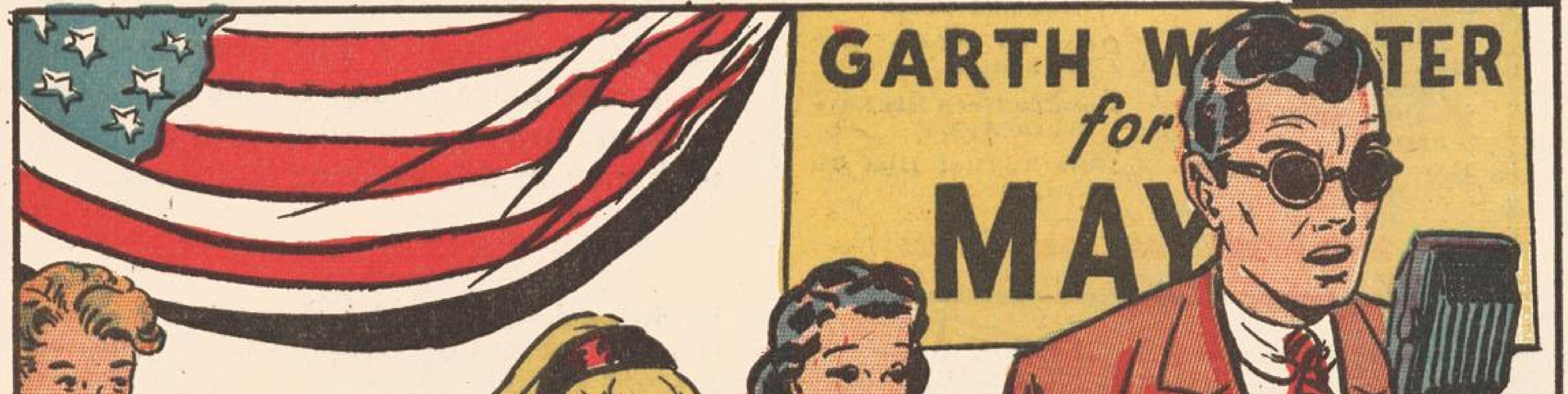
"Look, folks," I heard Garth saying, "I'll make a much better radio commentator than I would have a mayor—honest."

I lifted my head. "Wh-what?" I sniffled.

"It's true." Betty said proudly. "That radio station in the city, where Garth talked, has offered him a job. They say his voice is perfect. He memorizes like nothing, you know—and of course I'll help him. Oh, it's a wonderful opportunity—and, honey, we owe it all to you and Cleve."

Isn't it funny how sometimes things work out better if they don't work out exactly the way you'd planned?

THE END



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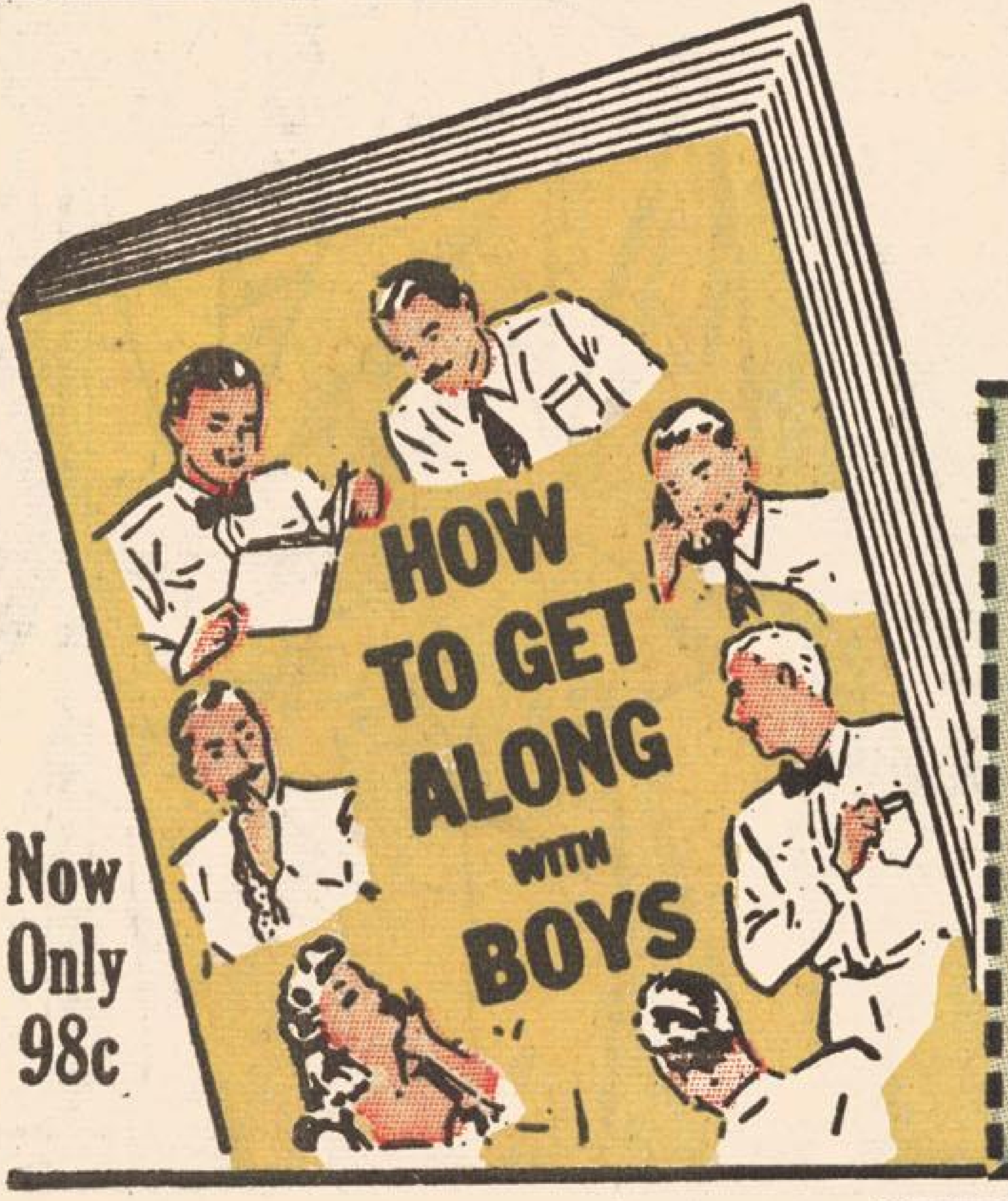
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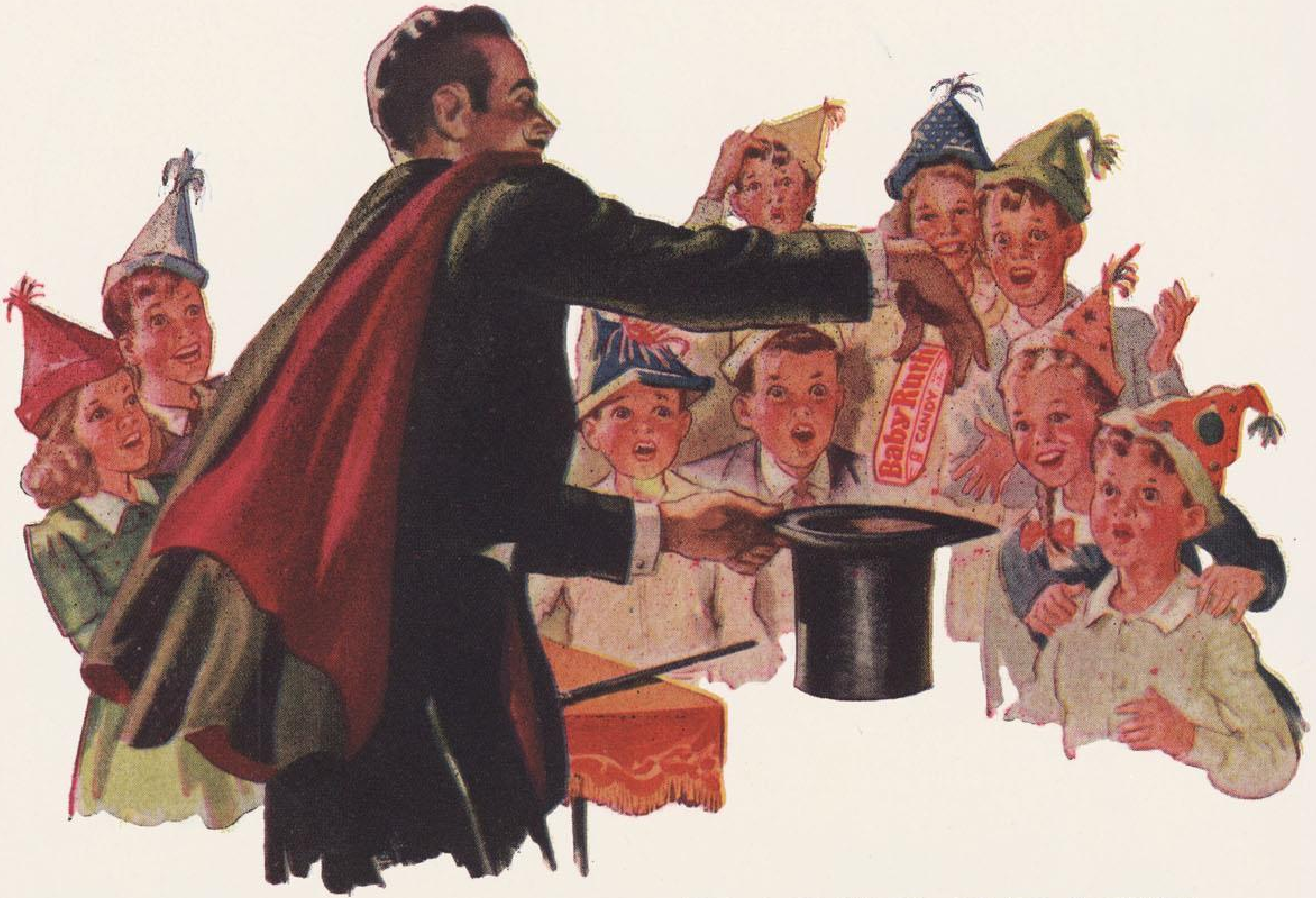

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